

# THE ARGOSY.

JUNE 1, 1871.

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## DENE HOLLOW.

BY THE AUTHOR OF "EAST LYNNE."

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### CHAPTER XVIII.

#### FRIGHTENING THE PONY.

THE June roses were in bloom, shedding their perfume on the air, and the hot midsummer sun lay on the smooth highways, on the plains sweet with the drying hay, on the ripening corn.

On never a smoother and fairer road to look at than the one you have so often heard of, Dene Hollow. The lad on his pony going down it, Otto Clanwaring, must have expected a pleasant ride on its white and level surface. Running after the pony, as it turned out of the gates of Beechhurst Dene, came Jarvis Clanwaring. And, standing with his back against the fence, was Tom. Time has grown older, and the boys have grown with it. Tom is nearly seven now, Otto nine, Jarvis ten.

There is not, except for this, much change in them. Jarvis is thin and wirey as ever, with the same dark, sly eyes; Otto is rather fat, dark, and stolid; Tom has the same golden hair, the frank face, the kindly, thoughtful, rich blue eyes. The three boys are at school, but not at the same one; for Lady Lydia Clanwaring (putting it upon the score of difference in years) had successfully contrived that Tom should not contaminate the same establishment that her boys honoured. They have come home for the midsummer holidays; and are tired with the long morning spent in the hay-field. But that Jarvis is very excessively tired, and has besides some appointment connected with ferrets, he would have taken the pony for himself. It is one Sir Dene keeps for the boys' use when they are at home, and is called Whitestar from a white star on its forehead.

Tom is standing perfectly still against the fence, somewhere about

the exact spot on which had once stood the dwelling of the Widow Barber. His elbows are pushed back on the lower rail, and he is in a brown study, watching the approach of the pony and its rider. Gander had told him he might go out on the pony that afternoon: but, just as he was about to mount, the two elder ones ordered him away, and took it themselves. Tom feels no resentment; only a little disappointment: it does not occur to him that he is ill-used, for he has become accustomed to give up to his cousins in all things, just as a servant yields to his masters.

Otto put the pony into a gentle canter, and came on; Jarvis was following slowly on the pathway. As the pony passed Tom, it swerved violently, as if startled, dashed off at a gallop and threw its rider. Jarvis rushed up in a fury.

"You young hound!" he cried, seizing on Tom's head and beginning to pummel it, "what did you frighten him for?"

"I didn't frighten him," said Tom.

"You did, you varmint! I saw you."

"I didn't, Jarvis; indeed I didn't," cried Tom.

Otto came back, rubbing his head and looking ruefully. His clothes and face and hair were all dust; his temple was grazed.

"Was it him did it, Jarvis?"

"Of course it was him, nasty little devil! He's always up to some mean trick."

"Otto, I didn't," persisted Tom. "I didn't do anything."

"I heard him give a hiss, and I saw him kick his leg out and pitch a stone; and it frightened Whitestar."

Now this barefaced assertion of Master Jarvis's was neither more nor less than a deliberate lie. He had all his mother's ingenuity of invention, and was never happier than when exercising it to the detriment of the scapegoat Tom. A scapegoat in the fullest sense of the term, he; and destined to be one, poor fellow! As you will find when you read on.

Otto looked from one to the other—on his brother's thrust-out face with its evil black eyes; on Tom's piteous one, with its running tears. Otto had this good quality—that if he knew a lie to be a lie he would never uphold it; no, not even for Jarvey. But Otto was by no means good natured, he was too selfish to trouble himself to be so; and moreover he was being reared to despise Tom and put upon him.

"I never stirred my leg or hissed, and I didn't heave a stone," pleaded the lad earnestly. "It wasn't me, Otto."

Jarvis kicked, and pummelled, and pushed, and so drowned the words in pain. A man who had caught Whitestar, was leading him up. Thus the damaged party entered the Dene gates. Lady Lydia, seeing it from her window, came flying out to learn what the matter might be, and heard of Tom's iniquities. Poor Tom's voice was like

a little piping reed amidst the fierce ones of his accusers: even in self-defence he scarcely dared to lift it in the presence of Lady Lydia. She had long ago inspired him with an awe that he trembled at, but did not attempt to subdue or resist.

They had it out in the hall: Dovet and some of the inferior servants looking on. Gander was not in the way; neither was Sir Dene. Lady Lydia was in a silent passion of rage: she, to do her justice, believed, in this instance, that Tom was guilty. When did she *not* believe him guilty of anything he might be accused of? Had Jarvis brought to her a story that Tom had drunk the Severn dry, she would have given ear to it.

Baby though he was, or but little removed from one, she hated him with a bitter hatred. The fear of Sir Dene had not let her entirely crush him; but she was doing her best towards it in a quiet way, always working on for it safely and silently.

"Wicked, crafty reptile!" cried Lady Lydia, her eyes ablaze with a flashing light. "Poor dear Otto, poor inoffensive boy, riding by without thought of treachery, must have his pony startled and his life put in danger by *you*! Take him, Dovet, and whip him. Whip him well."

Dovet seized on Tom by the hand to bear him off to punishment. It came pretty often, this chastisement, and Tom neither might nor dared resist. On trying to resist once, the whipping had been redoubled: in Dovet's hands, a strong woman, Tom was not only powerless, but conscious that he was. He submitted so quietly in a general way, that Dovet was quite astounded at his breaking from her now.

It was only to run back to Otto. A sweeter disposition than heaven had implanted in this little orphan of Tom Clanwaring's never was possessed by son of man. He could not bear, literally could not *bear*, that another should suffer through him. Lady Lydia had reiterated to him that he might have killed Otto: and the words struck sorely on the child.

"Otto, I'm going with Dovet to be whipped," he said, the tears streaming down his face, "but I didn't do it. Please don't think it was me, Otto."

There had been no latent thought in his mind that this further denial would prevent his punishment. Without a moment's hesitation he turned to Dovet's capturing hand and was caught by it, his little legs running to keep up with her strides, his tears flowing.

"Mamma," said deliberate Otto, after giving a minute or two to ponder matters in his mind, "I'm not sure that it was him. He doesn't tell stories often."

Tom never told them. One of the chief characteristics of the boy was simple, innate truthfulness. He had learnt to be silent and take as his due unmerited correction, but an untruth he had

never told in his life. No one at the Dene believed this: even its master almost doubted. The fact was, Jarvis and Tom were so very often in opposite tales, the one's word against the other's—and Jarvis was both keen and crafty, with his mother to back him, and moreover had the advantage over Tom by three years, and generally contrived to make his own assertion appear good—that Tom was beginning to be looked upon by some of them as an audacious little story teller.

"I say it mightn't have been him, mamma," repeated Otto, a second time, finding that he received no notice. "Shall I go and tell Dovet not to whip him?"

"No," sharply returned Lady Lydia. "He does not get whipped often enough, low-born brat!"

"But if he didn't frighten Whitestar?" persisted Otto: who was not without a sense of justice.

"Not frighten Whitestar! Did you not hear Master Clanwaring say he saw him! Hold your tongue, Otto."

Just as she had called her husband Captain Clanwaring,—and Major Clanwaring now, for he had got his promotion—so did she generally speak of her eldest son as "Master Clanwaring," even to his brother and sister. Otto to the servants was "Master Otto;" Tom simply "Tom" when she condescended to name him at all; she generally spoke of him as "that boy."

Tom took his punishment with tears and sobs; not loud but deep: if he had made much noise Dovet would have treated him to a double portion. She kept an old thin leather slipper for the purpose, and whipped him soundly with that: Dovet's expression was, "warmed him," and she did it kindly.

Lady Lydia Clanwaring's resolve to remain and rule at Beechhurst Dene had been admirably carried out. Very soon after her arrival, trouble sprang up with the servants. She, assuming full control and management of the household affairs by Sir Dene's will, introduced certain new rules and regulations, which the old servants rebelled against. Warfare waged hotly. Blame lay on both sides. Lady Lydia was arbitrary and haughty; they, long accustomed to their own will, were disobedient and insolent. The result was, they left in a body; Lady Lydia dismissed them. All went, including the housekeeper and Susan Cole. My lady had tried in a cautious manner to get Gander out also, and failed: Gander was perhaps a firmer fixture at Beechhurst Dene than she was. A new set of servants came in, engaged by my lady, and things went on peaceably. She made Dovet housekeeper, under herself; but Lady Lydia was the real manager. That she was a very good one, could not be denied: with fewer servants, there was a vast deal more of quiet order and less of outlay. Sir Dene felt the benefit of her rule: his pockets were



saved, he had greater comfort; he was grateful accordingly, and learned to put trust in the Lady Lydia. As to her quitting the Dene, such a thing was never named. Sir Dene was glad to have her there, the house had wanted the controlling law of a mistress, and it left him at liberty to be absent as much as he chose, knowing that all was going on in due order at home. He was away more than ever, for he had grown to like a London life.

Of course, these frequent absences of Sir Dene put absolute power into the hands of Lady Lydia. She ruled with despotic will. She was rather nearer in housekeeping matters at these times than the servants liked: they whispered one to another, that of the liberal sum allowed by Sir Dene, a good portion of it went into her own pocket. Which was true. Little Tom had hard times of it at these intervals. If it happened that Sir Dene was away during the Christmas or midsummer holidays, Tom felt the loss severely. Scarcely ever was he allowed to dine at the same table as his cousins, but was banished to Dovet's room and took his meals there. The children, taking their cue naturally from their mother, had wholly despised him from the very day of their arrival; they did not look upon him as one of the same order as themselves, but as an inferior and dependent; and the feeling grew and grew. Even in the matter of dress he was not as they were: the old clothes of Jarvis and Otto were mended up for him: what few new things had to be bought were of a coarse and poor description. Sir Dene failed to see it, or to detect the miserable influence at work. If he noticed that Tom looked less well dressed than the others, Lady Lydia would say Yes, because he spoils his things so. In truth, Tom's clothes often came to grief; but it was chiefly through Jarvis. Jarvis did not spare him: he boxed Tom, he tore his clothes, he sent him up trees and into ponds. Somehow or other Tom was always in trouble, and the house in a commotion on account of Tom's misdoings. Continual dropping will wear away a stone: and the complaints of Tom's sins were so continual, that Sir Dene, sick and tired of it, grew hard upon the boy himself. Where's Tom? sometimes the baronet would say, missing him from the rest: and then Jarvis or his mother would tell some bad tale of Tom, and my lady say she had banished him for punishment. Which meant either that he was consigned to Dovet's society, or to his bed in the garret, or shut out of the house to run abroad anywhere. She got to say that Tom's bad example would contaminate her children: she assured Sir Dene that he was the "greatest little liar" under the sun. Poor Tom, cowed, timid, sensitive, intensely generous, did not often defend himself: how could he when his words, truth though they bore, were flung back in his teeth by the others? And so Sir Dene got to think less well of the boy and to suffer the slighting treatment cast on him—not that he saw, or suspected, the one half of the oppression. But he loved

Tom still in his heart—far better than he would ever love Jarvis or Otto.

Tom's punishment with the slipper over, he was put to stand by Dovet in a corner of the room, his face to the wall. Leaning his head against it, he cried away the smarting pain, and finally cried himself to sleep. Gander came in and saw him crouched down on the floor, his poor little face, the tears still wet on it, upturned.

"What's been the row this time?" familiarly demanded the butler.

"He has almost killed Master Otto," was the comprehensive answer of Dovet, who was whisking away at some cream with a whisk.

"A'most killed Master Otto!" repeated the startled Gander. "How on earth did he do that?"

"Master Otto was on the pony. He kicked out and shouted and started it on, malicious little wretch—and poor Master Otto was thrown."

"Why—what made him do it?"

"What makes him do other wicked things?" retorted Dovet.

"Did he do it?" said Gander.

"Did he? Don't I tell you he did?"

"Well—look here, Mrs. Dovet. There's always something or other being brought against the child—and I don't believe he is in fault one time out o' ten. Now don't you fly out like that: keep your tongue for others. One o' these days I shall be telling the master how the child's put upon. As to malicious, that he never was."

"Suppose you mind your own business, and let other folks's alone," suggested Dovet with composure.

"He's Mr. Geoffry again all over, that child is. *He* had got no maliciousness about him, he hadn't."

Dovet whisked away.

"The very moral of his father, he is," went on Gander, "save that he's a sight more timid and quiet—Mr. Geoffry never was that. The child has got that from his mother. And a good thing too: else you'd ha' broke his spirit, afore this, among you."

The voice and step of Sir Dene in the passage outside, stopped Gander. The baronet had come in by the back entrance, and was walking straight to the housekeeper's room, a bunch of water lilies in his hand.

"Put them into water, Dovet. Lady Lydia—"

He caught sight of Tom at that moment, and stopped. The noise aroused the boy, and he stood up. Sir Dene saw something was wrong.

"He has nearly killed Master Otto, Sir Dene," spoke Dovet, in explanation. "Leastways 'twas not his fault that he didn't. Little mean, disreputable boy, he is, I'm sure!"

At that moment Tom did look tolerably disreputable. His face

dirty with the rubbing and crying, his pretty hair rumbled into a tangled mass, his clothes dusty and untidy. Jarvis and Otto, hearing the entrance of Sir Dene, came trooping in, followed by Lady Lydia. And Sir Dene was made acquainted with Tom's iniquity.

"How came you to do such a thing?" demanded Sir Dene sternly. "You naughty, mischievous boy! Suppose you had killed him?"

"I didn't do it, grandpapa," replied the child, his blue eyes raised to Sir Dene's through their blinding tears. And those eyes, Geoffry's over again, never failed to make their own way with Sir Dene.

"You did not do it?" he said, more gently.

"Indeed, indeed I did not. I was by the fence and I never stirred."

Jarvis fiercely interposed. He had *seen* it all, he said: Seen the kick-out and the stone flung after Whitestar, and heard the hiss. As usual, it was word against word; Tom's feeble and tearful, Jarvey's bold and self-asserting. But for those earnest blue eyes that so brought back his dear son Geoffry, Sir Dene had not hesitated. He looked from the one boy to the other—as Otto had done in Dene Hollow—and wavered. Sir Dene had his private reasons for thinking Jarvey might be mistaken. Mistaken, you understand; not wilfully false. The Lady Lydia did her best always in confidential moments to persuade Sir Dene that his eldest grandson (eldest in years) was an upright little gentleman, next door to an angel.

"What have *you* to say about it, Otto?" asked the baronet. "Did Tom do this thing, or did he not?"

"I couldn't see, grandpapa. I had my head turned the bank way: Tom was against the fence."

"Did you hear him hiss?"

"No, I was whistling."

"Or feel the stone?"

"No, and I didn't feel the stone. I think he must have flung the stone, else why should Whitestar have started? He'd not take fright for nothing."

Sir Dene did not feel so sure of that—remembering the particular spot it occurred in.

"You might have heard the hiss he gave down at Hurst Leet," protested Jarvis. "You might have seen him fling the stone a mile off."

And then the talking nearly overpowered Sir Dene, and quite bewildered him. Lady Lydia said there *could* not be a doubt about it—Master Clanwaring had seen all this with his own eyes; and she furthermore said that Tom had done it in revenge, because Otto had taken the pony when he wanted it for himself. To have listened to her, Sir Dene might have thought that there never existed so wicked a little lad on earth, as this waif of his favourite son's. Nevertheless, he believed that the charge might have arisen from misapprehension, the pony not

having been wilfully started. He knew also that boys, at the best, are carelessly mischievous, doing ill sometimes in very thoughtlessness.

"If I thought you had done this thing, maliciously, Tom, I should flog you myself—and that I have never done yet," he said. "I can but believe that some action of yours, perhaps unintentional on your part, startled the pony. You beg Otto's pardon directly, sir; and tell him you will be more careful for the future."

Never daring to maintain that he was wholly innocent, Tom, his eyes streaming, did what he was told, and begged Otto's pardon. The very fact of his doing it without any demur, convinced some of them that he was guilty. In a degree it did Sir Dene.

But, seated alone in the solitude of his own bay-windowed parlour, the baronet, weighing the matter in his mind, believed that the pony might have started of its own accord. For he had grown, even he, Sir Dene Clanwaring, had grown to dislike that spot for horses.

Accident after accident had continued to take place upon it. The series, inaugurated by Sir Dene's own horses—the reader may remember the day he was being driven down the road by poor Geoffry—had culminated only a month or two ago in a very singular mishap indeed. How many there had been between the two does not matter: several; but not one fatal. Drew the bailiff had recovered partially of his: he could go about in a hand chair, and talk and laugh and eat his meals at will: and his had been the worst case.

Dene Hollow, smooth and level and well-kept road though it was, was getting a bad name. People talked about the "shadow" on it a great deal more than Sir Dene liked. Not that any shadow was ever seen there by human eyes, but the popular belief was that there did in some way exist at times that shadow, and horses were startled at it. Sir Dene thought it was the most ridiculously absurd notion a sane parish had ever picked up: and no doubt the reader is thinking the same. The fact, however, was indisputable—and I am recording nothing but the truth—that horse after horse had been startled there in a mysterious manner: mysterious because there was apparently nothing to startle them. Twice over Sir Dene had had the road examined by officers connected with what was called the post-horse duty, lest any imperceptible roughness or ridge might be found to lie on it—but nothing of the kind could be discovered. Whenever Sir Dene drove or rode up or down it now, he held his horses very carefully in hand; for though he utterly scouted the superstitious gossip around, he could not scout the fact that horses did come to grief there, frequently and unaccountably.

The last mishap is one to be noticed. A gentleman named Dickreen, living in Hurst Leet, died; and his remains were to be taken to a small village church, lying out beyond the Trailing Indian. The funeral was proceeding up Dene Hollow at the usual decorous pace,

Hurst Leet bell tolling solemnly, and Hurst Leet having turned out to watch the progress. A funeral of the better class, involving a hearse and mourning coaches, with a black chariot in front for the parson in his surplice, and sticks and mutes and feathers, was not an every-day sight in the rural district. As the hearse approached the ill-omened spot (the parson's chariot having passed on soberly) the four horses, with one accord, as it seemed, attempted to turn suddenly round. The driver, scandalized at their behaviour, stopped it of course, and whipped them up. But no: the horses would not go on. And what precisely happened then, nobody could afterwards tell, for all was over in a moment. There was a noise, a bustle, confusion: undertakers' men on foot ran, drivers shouted: in the midst of it the hearse seemed to spring up on the bank with a violent jerk, which sent the door open and the coffin out end-ways.

Only think of the scandal to a sober funeral! Hurst Leet remembers it to this day. What could have possessed the fat, steady, slow-going horses, hardly ever moving beyond a foot's pace—that they should have danced up the bank as if they were dancing a jig, and shown signs of fear until their coats ran wet again? It was never accounted for. It was, in truth, unaccountable. The funeral was going up-hill, you understand; not down. The astounded mourners got out of their coaches; the horses were soothed to quietness; and the attendants shut up the coffin in the hearse again.

Now this happened. It was talked of far and wide. Hurst Leet would tell you of it to this day. Even Sir Dene Clanwaring could no more explain it than he could deny it. And since then a hazy sort of impression had floated in his mind that there must be something at the spot that did frighten horses, though man could not see it. Hence he believed that Otto's pony might have started without any help from little Tom or anybody else.

These thoughts in his mind, Sir Dene, sitting in his room, sent for the child. He held Tom before his knee while he talked to him. First of all, he gave him a lecture about telling untruths, saying that his papa (Geoffry) had never told any and would be sure to have whipped Tom for doing it, if he were living. "And I'm sure *I* cannot continue to love you," concluded Sir Dene.

With his little heart nearly breaking at the sense of the injustice that all seemed to deal out to him,—with the tears welling up in his blue eyes,—with the bitter sobs impeding his utterance, Tom said again what he had said before: that he did not do anything to frighten the pony, or think of doing it. Sir Dene saw how earnestly the child spoke; he noted the confiding look of the honest blue eyes that shone upon him through their tears. Never had he felt inclined to believe Tom more than now: especially with those accidents to other horses filling his thoughts.

"I could believe you from my heart, Tom, and understand it into the bargain, but for Jarvey. He says he *saw* you purposely frighten Whitestar."

Between his extreme sensitiveness for other's feelings, his large generosity, and his innate timidity—which was increased ten-fold by the thralldom he was kept in, the slights he received—Tom was literally unable to say to Sir Dene that Jarvey told falsehoods. This was only one instance out of many where Jarvey had accused him without any manner of reason, and he had never said to Sir Dene, "It is Jarvis who tells the stories, not I." Another thing may have helped to deter him—the certainty that he should not be believed. Jarvey would make his own cause good, and Lady Lydia turn the tables on him with a vengeance.

"I didn't do it, grandpa," was all he repeated, catching up his breath in pain.

"But you know you do tell stories, Tom."

"No I don't, grandpa," sobbed the child. "I should be afraid for God to hear me."

"Then Jarvey must have seen double—sees so often, too," cried the baronet explosively—for somehow the answer carried truth with it. "Anyway, I believe you now. And there's a shilling for you, Tom."

But, as a rule, Sir Dene did not question the boy in private, and Jarvey got all the credit, he none. The wondering whether the pony had really been startled accountably—or unaccountably, after the fashion of the other horses—had caused Sir Dene to question now. It was the exception.

And it sometimes happened in the accusations brought against Tom, the tales told of him, that he would be partially in fault. In the escapades that all three of the children shared—and the girl Louisa, with them—Tom alone would be made out to have been to blame; he was always the scapegoat. If all were throwing stones and a window got broken—Tom was said to have done it; if the pigs were let out of the sty or the chickens out of their pens, it was Tom who had opened the door: when the miller's little boy was pushed into the stream and nearly drowned, Tom was the culprit. Tom knew that he had, himself, done nothing of all this; but he had been with those who had, and no defence existed for him.

"A lie that is all a lie can be met with and fought outright,  
But a lie that is part of a truth is a harder matter to fight."



## CHAPTER XIX.

MISS MAY.

A FIELD whose perfume was redolent of new-mown hay, and whose prolific cocks told of a good crop, lay open to the sun on the fair June morning. The day was yet early: the hay-makers sang at their work. Attended by her nurse, Susan Cole, came a pretty little lady of some three years old, with a round lovely childish face, and rich brown eyes that looked out frankly from their long brown lashes, curling upwards. She wore a large white sun-bonnet, after the fashion of the children of the district, and was doing her best to scatter the hay about that the hay-makers had just raked up. Doing it quite in defiance of Susan Cole; for she was a very saucy and independent young lady indeed, continually in hot water with the ruling powers.

"Miss May, don't I tell you that them big cocks are *not* to be disturbed to-day—giving double trouble! I never see such a naughty little child as you are in all my life."

Miss May's answer to this was to climb up one of the mounds and pitch-pole down on the other side, bringing all the top of the cock with her. There she sat, quite still, for a wonder. And stillness was so unusual an element in Miss May Arde, that Susan Cole stepped round to see what other mischief she might be in.

"Oh! Well, I'm sure! Oh! You ondacious little girl!—a pulling off your shoes and socks afore all them haymakers!"

For the young lady had been quietly divesting herself of these articles of social attire, that she might dance in the hay barefoot. Eluding Susan's grasp with a ringing laugh, she flew off screaming, and flung herself into the arms of little Tom Clanwaring, who happened to be running up. *Little* Tom, in point of fact, but big Tom in the young damsel's eyes: his seven years, compared to her three, seemed to constitute a whole age.

Tom clasped the truant in his arms, and kissed her: they were the best of friends. Susan, bearing the socks and little shoes of bronze, took forcible possession now; and sat down on the field with the child on her lap. But the process of re-socking and re-shoeing was a difficult job. Laughing, rebellious, kicking out arms and legs, struggling and fighting with Susan, was Miss May. Tom helped—by tossing the socks over Susan's head.

"Now, Master Tom, I'll tell *you* what it is. If you be to encourage her in her naughty tricks, I'll ask my missis not to let you come in here at all. Tain't your field. She's the tiresom'st little worrit to-day that ever was. You be old enough to tell her better, you be. I never had half the trouble with you. Miss May, if you take your socks off as fast as I put 'em on, where'll be the end on't?"

Miss May managed to get one in her fingers, and sent it up on the next hay-cock. Tom was ordered to fetch it down.

At length, by dint of dexterous sleight-of-hand, Susan got on the socks and one shoe. While she was putting on the other, the young rebel tore off that one—and tore off the strap that fastened it round the ankle. Susan saw the mishap with dismay.

"There! Now you have done it, Miss May! Your shoe won't keep on without the strap—and how the sense be I to get you home in your sock? Of all ondacious little plagues you be the worst."

The "little plague"—Susan's attention being momentarily absorbed by the damaged shoe—got away, seized two arms full of hay and flung it over Tom. The children rolled on the ground together.

"A'most as good as a new pair, they was," lamented Susan. "And the kid be all tore right out o' the back so as it can't never be mended. My missis 'll blame me; she'll say I might ha' took better care. Tiresome monkey! I must go home for another shoe for her now. Master Tom, 'll you take care o' Miss May while I run to the Hall and back?"

Tom, feeling excessively proud at the request, turned to Susan, chivalrous earnestness sparkling from his deep blue eyes.

"I'll be sure to take care of her, Susan: she shan't hurt herself or run away."

And Susan, knowing that in point of fact both the children would be safe under the protection of the haymakers, men and women, busy close by, and all familiar peasants of the district, departed on her errand.

You may be wondering who this girl of three years old is—whose second name, Mary, generally got shortened into May. She was the child of George Arde and his present wife: the only child of the Hall. That frail blossom, the first Mary, the child of George Arde and Mary Owen, the little one to whom the old Squire used to carry presents of coral beads and else, and to whom he left the fortune, was no more. The delicate little creature, who had inherited her mother's beauty and no doubt her mother's frailty of constitution, had pined away and died. The second Mrs. Arde did her best to nurse and cherish her into health; but it was not to be: God called her to Himself. Before this other child was born (destined to be the second Mrs. Arde's only one), the elder was lying by her mother's side in St. Peter's churchyard at Worcester. Mary happened to be the second Mrs. Arde's name also, so it was one of the names given to her infant. They had got into the habit (especially Mr. Arde and Susan Cole) of calling that departed little one the "first Mary." For this second Mary no fears were entertained on the score of health: she was hearty and strong. Susan was wont to say at reproachful moments that if she had only as little mischievousness in her as she had tendency to sickness, she'd do.

Susan Cole's life had undergone a blight—she had been crossed in love. At least, that's what she said of herself when wishing to be confidential. But where the blight had fallen and how it had affected her, was not so clear: certainly it had touched neither her tongue nor her cheerful temper. That false journeyman at her father's forge had married another. At the very time (as may be said) that he was whispering love vows in Susan's ear, he was courting another at Worcester: and one fine morning he went off and married her—a great ugly malkin, as Susan expressed it. Cole the farrier told Susan she was well out of it; for the man (he had previously had to discharge him) had grown so drunken and idle that he was hardly worth his salt at the trade, and would not be likely to get a living for any wife. Perhaps Susan, in her heart, thought the same. At least she wasted no superfluous time in grief. It occurred just as she and the other servants were turning out of the Dene through Lady Lydia: the nurse at the Hall was leaving, and Susan stepped into the post.

Little Tom Clanwaring had been allowed to run in and out of the Hall since its new mistress came to it as freely as he did before. Mrs. Arde liked the beautiful boy with his golden curls and his wonderful eyes of blue that gazed so straightly and fearlessly into her own: she liked his gentle manners, and his curiously strange (at that early age) consideration for others. No one had wept more bitterly for the little girl's death than Tom. It had pleased the child to have Tom very much with her: Mrs. Arde allowed it: and perhaps the scenes of sickness, the distressing grief evinced by Mr. Arde, had made an impression on Tom that he would never lose. That she had gone straight up to be an angel in Heaven, no earthly power could have reasoned him out of. For days and weeks after her death, he would fancy he saw her robed in white, with a little harp of gold in her hand, and a crown amid her hair, looking down at him from the skies. Tom—then between three and four years old—was taken to the funeral at St. Peter's by Squire Arde: and Sir Dene had him put into mourning for his cousin. Lady Lydia, supremely indignant, would have pitched the black things out at window had she dared. "Spending money to put *that* beggar's brat in mourning!" she mockingly remarked to Dovet.

A month onwards, and the other little girl came to the Hall to replace the one lost. Tom had never seen anything so wonderful as this new baby. The reverence with which he would regard the infant, when allowed to hold her for a minute in his arms (seated safely flat on the carpet), was great and real. The baby called forth the first true-love of his heart: in his own mind he acquired a kind of proprietorship in her: and he would far rather have died himself than suffered harm to come to the little one.

So that when, on this day, Susan told him to take care of her while

she went home for another shoe, Tom was in the seventh region of gratification. The field belonged to Squire Arde, and was within a stone's throw of the Hall.

"May," began Tom as Susan's footsteps faded on their ears, "I've got a new picture-book that Grandma Owen bought for me. I've got it in my pocket."

May, with all her wild fun, was intensely fond of "picture-books." Down sat the children together at the foot of a hay-cock, their feet stretched out (one of Miss May's shoeless) and the book held between them.

Like all books bought by Mrs. Owen for Tom, it had a religious tendency. That is, while the story in itself was beautiful, and calculated entirely to rivet the interest of a child, it insensibly led its young reader to higher and better thoughts. Such books, when they are well and suitably written, are the very best that can be put into the hands of a child. There has been a singular dearth of them in these later years. There they sat, the two: May's little tongue asking questions about the "pictures," and Tom explaining to the best of his ability. Which explanations might have sent a grown person into fits of laughter.

"Me wis me tould read!" exclaimed May, when, the pictures exhausted—the book only contained three—they had to fall back upon the reading.

"I'll read it to you, May," said Tom.

With their backs against the haycock, and their heads bent over the book, the little lady's cheek touching his, Tom began. The progress was not satisfactory; since at the end of every two lines, or so, Tom was called upon to say why this was, and why that was. Suddenly a shadow fell upon the book and upon them. Up went their heads, and nearly a whole haycock was flung in their faces: Not lightly, either; for the flinger was Jarvis Clanwaring. Absorbed in the book, and with each other, neither had seen him approach. May burst into a loud cry of pain: the hay had struck her in the eye. Down went the book, and up jumped Tom.

"What did you do that for, Jarvis? You've hurt her."

"What did I do it for, you insolent young rat! How dare *you* ask me what I did it for? Because I chose. There. Squalling little cat! She's not hurt."

May, who hated Jarvis at all times because she was afraid of him, began kicking out with all her little might as she sat, the tears falling from her smarting eyes.

"Make him go away, Tom! make him go away. Me tell mamma."

"You are to go away please," said Tom, standing up bravely to shelter May. "You've no right to hurt her, Jarvis."

"She's not hurt—nasty stinking little toad."

Tom, his eyes flashing fire (as his sweet-natured father's had flashed once or twice in his brief life), clenched his impotent small fist, and struck straight out and upwards at Mr. Jarvis's face, catching him between the eyes. The blow could not hurt very much; but it was a bit of a smart, and it smarted all the more because it was not expected. Jarvis, in a frantic passion, pummelled Tom's face back again, and an unequal fight ensued. May screamed as if she were going mad with terror; and one of the women and Susan Cole rushed up together. Tom's nose was streaming with blood; Jarvis was not apparently injured. But in that culminating moment, he contrived to damage himself. Turning shortly upon his heel to confront the indignant Susan, he stumbled over a rake handle, that the women had let fall, and cut his upper lip with the rake's teeth. More blood: and May screamed worse than ever from sheer terror. Susan caught up the child and hid her face upon her protecting shoulder.

"How *dare* you get fighting, Master Tom—and when I left you to take care of Miss May!" demanded Susan, not caring to attack Jarvis in his present state of fury: for, once, when she had interfered with him, he had kicked her in a rather serious manner. "Well, I'm sure! We shall have a baby in arms, I suppose, standing up to fight next!"

"He called May names," said Tom, who could not restrain his tears between pain and excitement. "He hurt her in the eye."

"You confounded little blackguard!" cried Jarvis, trying to dodge up to Tom again with outstretched hand. "Do you suppose I shall ask your leave whether I call names or not? She is a toad. There!"

"She's not a toad, and you shan't call her one," retorted Tom. "You are a coward."

Further demonstration on Jarvis's part was stopped by his swallowing a tooth. One that had been nearly ready to fall out before, and which the blow on the rake must have quite done for. Tom Clanwaring's instinct was sure and true: Jarvis *was* a coward. Not only in the matter of bullying little girls and fighting boys less than himself, but in other matters. This swallowing of the tooth sent him into a state of mortal terror: he had heard a tale at school of some boy who had swallowed a tooth and died after it. Jarvis, suddenly remembering this, turned tail and rushed off the hay-field the colour of chalk.

"You come on to the Hall, Master Tom, that your nose may be seen to," said Susan. "A sweet pickle it's in! Enough to frighten the crows."

"A brave little gentleman, wi' all his pretty manners, that born son o' poor Master Geoffry's," was the comment of the woman to the other haymakers when the fray was over. "As to the big un, he's more of a tartar nor his mother."

Arde Hall was not much to look at. A rather long, red-brick building, two stories high, with narrow windows and a slated roof, its front looking towards the village. The old-fashioned portico in the middle of the house opened upon a lawn that was intersected with flower-beds; on which bees and butterflies were sporting that sunny June day. Mrs. Arde—a nice-looking, but somewhat reserved and stately woman—fond of gardening, was tending her flowers in a sun bonnet and pair of old gloves, talking the while to her husband, who sat at one of the open windows. Naturally they felt some surprise at the entrance of the procession: Susan carrying May, who sobbed aloud still; Tom with a damaged face and bleeding nose. Susan opened at once upon his delinquencies—that he “up with his fist” and struck Master Clanwaring, and they had a fight.

“He called May names,” said Tom, with fresh tears, but looking up fearlessly. “I couldn’t help hitting him.”

Squire Arde burst out laughing. “A very knight-errant,” said he, “taking up the cudgels for damsels in distress!”

“But what ails May?” said Mrs. Arde, as she took the sobbing child.

“Oh, *she’s* only frightened, ma’am,” was Susan’s slighting answer. “And enough to frighten her, to see the blood on this here face of his’n,” concluded the girl as she walked Tom off to the pump.

The lavatory process over, Tom came back to kiss the little girl—then seated on the grass—and whisper that Jarvis should never frighten or hurt her again, or call her names, if *he* could help it. Then he ran off home.

Where the discomfited and frightened Jarvis had previously arrived. At this time, Mrs. Clanwaring, the wife of John the heir, was on a visit to Beechhurst Dene, with her daughter, Margaret, her eldest boy, and two little sons, younger: so that just now the Dene seemed full of children. She was a good-natured and very pretty woman—her own large fortune enabling her to indulge in show and luxuries that might not even be dreamed of by Lady Lydia. For instance she had arrived with a lady’s maid and three nurses, and one male servant who was called her own footman, the party having posted from town in two carriages and four. These things were looked upon as necessities by Mrs. Clanwaring, because she had been reared to them: but she was, herself, entirely unpretentious, of quite simple tastes and manners. The two ladies were sitting together in that attractive room, the library, when Jarvis burst in upon them like a panting ghost—if ghosts ever display cut lips, and chins dripping human gore. The boy was literally terror-stricken: his features were swollen with his insane endeavours to cough up the tooth coming along, his eyes rolled, his face was whiter than any ghosts ever seen yet. A deplorable figure altogether. Up jumped the Lady Lydia, uttering scream upon scream; she quite



believed her darling boy was either mad or killed, and began to hug him. Pretty Mrs. Clanwaring, in defiance of her good manners, laughed a little.

The tale that Master Jarvis told was as good as a play : no dramatic author ever drew more on his inventive powers. Tom was represented as a very monster of iniquity, who had attacked Jarvis with a rake, "on the sly," cut off his lip and knocked all his teeth down his throat !

But that the teeth were in his head still, plainly to be seen beneath the swollen upper lip *not* cut off, Lady Lydia, in her dismay, might have sent off for the nearest stomach-pump. The whole house was aroused to commotion. Basins of hot water were ordered in succession ; Lady Lydia, Dovet, and a dozen others bathing with soft sponges, and without intermission, the injured lip. Under the assurances of my lady and Mrs. Clanwaring that a solitary tooth, going down by accident, never killed people, but on the contrary was rather good for digestion, the gentleman was soothed into calmness. The disturbance had brought forth Sir Dene from his bay-parlour, where he was engaged with accounts : he stayed long enough to hear the woeful account of Tom's savage attack, and then went back again.

When Tom got home, shortly afterwards, Jarvis was lying on the sofa, his mouth tied up with a white handkerchief, and some delicious apricot jam by his side. Dovet met Tom in the hall.

"You have done a nice thing," cried she, nearly jerking his arm out of its socket. "You've almost killed Master Clanwaring."

Almost killed Master Clanwaring ! Full of consternation, the words striking no end of remorse on his little heart, Tom opened the library door and went in timidly. He did not present any grand appearance himself, for, in running home, his nose had burst out bleeding again. The moment Jarvis saw him, he leaped off the sofa, and gave him an ugly kick. Mrs. Clanwaring ran to the rescue and pushed Jarvis off : but the vicious malice that blazed in his eyes, she did not forget for years.

"Not in my presence, Jarvey. How can you attack a little fellow who is no match for you ? It is perfectly wicked to kick any one in that savage way. I am afraid you are a coward."

"Why did he attack me in the hay-field ?" retorted Jarvey. "I'll kill him if I can."

But Lady Lydia pounced on Tom and whirled him off with her. What with the sight of him, and what with Mrs. Clanwaring's words, her fury at least equalled that of Jarvis. On the mahogany slab in the passage, leading to the side entrance and Sir Dene's parlour, lay the boys' riding whip. Seizing hold of it, she struck Tom : not perceiving, perhaps not caring, that a young man not belonging to the house, was at that moment turning out of the bay-parlour. Struck him anywhere :

on his shoulders, on his unprotected face, on his bare hands. Gander, propping his back against his pantry door, stood looking on. As did the stranger, who was no other than William Owen of Harebell Farm. The cuts were sharp and quick : Tom shrieked with pain, and it brought out Sir Dene. My lady ceased then : and the baronet pushed by William Owen.

"Wait !" cried Sir Dene in a voice of thunder, as she was making off with the child. "Wait, I say !" So Lady Lydia left the boy, threw down the whip, and disappeared. Sir Dene caused Tom to stand and confront him. His poor little face had a livid weal across it.

"Now, sir, tell me the truth. Did you strike Jarvis before he struck you ?"

Up went the honest eyes through their tears with fearless truth straight into Sir Dene's.

"Yes, grandpa. 'Twas me hit him first."

"Did you cut his mouth ? And knock his tooth down his throat ?"

"I suppose so. I didn't know."

"And what on earth tempted you to be so ferocious a child as to do all this ?"

"He called May wicked names, grandpa ; he hurt her in the eye and frightened her. Susan had told me to take care of her while she went for another shoe."

Sir Dene bit his lip to prevent a smile. The same thought occurred to him that had come to George Arde—and amused him—this little lad, rising seven, doing battle for a lady attacked ! But he was frightfully annoyed at my Lady Lydia.

"Who hurt your nose ?—and made it swell like that ?"

"Jarvis did : he made it bleed. He hit me worse than I hit him."

"No doubt on't," commented Gander, from the kitchen door.

"Well, you must have been a naughty boy altogether, Tom ; very naughty ; and Lady Lydia has punished you for it. Try and be good for the future—if you can."

Sir Dene turned into his parlour again ; William Owen, although his interview was over, followed him in and shut the door. Gander retreated into his pantry.

All sobbing and wounded as he was, Tom ran out at the side door and down the straight path, to take shelter at Harebell farm. His heart was cruelly sore as he went up the stairs—for Mrs. Owen was keeping her chamber. Not sore at thought of his weals and wounds, but at the injustice dealt out to him. Jarvis had been more of an offender than he, and was petted up with jam ; *he* was taunted and whipped. Tom had been *inured* to this unjust treatment, but it did strike him with pain to-day. Mary Barber, coming out of her mistress's chamber all in a bustle, on her way to make some dumplings for dinner, was quite struck aback at the sight of Tom.

"Mercy upon us!" cried she. "Why what in the name o' goodness is the matter?"

Sobbing, choking, Tom told his tale, leaning for protection—and it seemed to the child that he needed it—against Mrs. Owen. She had some warm water brought up, and bathed his poor face and hands, and spoke gently to him, and soothed his spirit: the tears falling from her own eyes as she thought it might have been better had the poor little waif died with his mother.

"But that I think I shall not be long here, and that William seems bent upon not staying in the place afterwards, I hardly know why, I would beg and pray of Sir Dene to let me have the child entirely," ran Mrs. Owen's thoughts.

As they had run, at odd times, for a long while now: Ever since the arrival of Lady Lydia, Mrs. Owen had clearly seen what the child's treatment was at the Dene, and the contempt he was held in. It was bad enough during these, his young years, when he could neither feel it very keenly nor attempt to rebel against it: what the result might be in later years, what complications and misfortunes it might bring about for the friendless child, she dreaded to think of. That Sir Dene would not be wilfully unjust to Geoffry's son, she believed; but Sir Dene was a man who loved peace and quietness, ease also; he was given to credit implicitly what he was told, never searching beneath the surface of things, and he was already nearly completely in the hands of his designing daughter-in-law.

His face in less of a smart, his grief over, save for a catching sob that took his breath at intervals (and Mary Barber gone down to bake a little cake for him), room was made for Tom on Mrs. Owen's sofa. He sat nestling against her, her arm round him, her pale face, so sweet and delicate and telling of sorrow and suffering, bending towards his. Never did Mrs. Owen fail to improve these occasions in the manner she thought it right and best to do. In place of standing out for vengeance on Jarvis or others, as some might have counselled, she whispered of endurance, of forbearance, of persevering on in the path of patience and truth, how ever much he might be tried, and of the ensuing of calm and holy peace. Trouble was certainly trying the child early; but she strove to show him, and to think, that it must be for the best. On some children these lessons might have been lost, might have borne no fruit: but Tom's natural disposition was so admirably adapted to receive them that they did on his. There's no doubt—however the reader may feel inclined to dispute and perhaps ridicule this small portion of the tale—that these inculcated lessons had a strangely-good effect on Tom. They helped him to bear now; they tended to form his character for after years. But for them, he would have been utterly miserable, might have sunk into a broken-spirited child, and perhaps become a veritable, abandoned young Arab. Day

after day, did Mrs. Owen patiently labour at her work—for never a day passed but Tom was driven out of the Dene by some oppression or other, active or passive—and she would send him back with all the sweetness of his disposition renewed, ready to bear again.

“Was it wrong to hit Jarvis when he called May those wicked names, grandma?”

Now here was a puzzle. Mrs. Owen privately rejoiced at Tom's spirit: but it was hardly consistent with the peaceful lessons she was inculcating to say so.

“Well, Tom, I—don't think in this case it was very wrong.”

“I wish he'd let me alone! I wish he'd not get grandpa to believe bad things of me. Oh grandma! you don't know how cruel it all is at home!”

A sobbing sigh, proving how sore his little heart was, followed on the words. Mrs. Owen pressed him closer in her gentle clasp, and spoke in a whisper.

“My darling, I do know it. I know how cruel it is, and how hard it is to endure. God sees it all, Tom; never lose thought of that, no not in the worst moment. You bear on fearlessly in truth and honour, my boy; always striving to return good for evil, even to Jarvis, in sweet-tempered, patient, generous forbearance: and trust all things to God. He will be sure to take care of you, and bring you to comfort in the end.”

Tom nodded with ready cheerfulness, as he had many and many a time before. There was resolution in his little face, cast up just then to the summer sky.

“I will, grandma, I will; I'll never forget. And, grandma, papa is looking down to take care of me too, and mamma is; and they are with God's angels.”

“Even so, my darling. Your best friends are in that better world where God is. I shall soon be there: and you will come to us in time. All these sufferings and trials are but making you ready for it.”

And the tractable little fellow, gazing up at the blue sky, and picturing all kinds of radiant things beyond it, quite forgot present pain.

“Now then, Master Tom!” called out the sharp voice of Mary Barber from the foot of the stairs, “come down for your lard-cake. It have come out o' the oven beautiful.”

## CHAPTER XX.

### DRIVEN FROM HAREBELL FARM.

“CAN you see anybody, Sir Dene?”

“Who is it?” asked Sir Dene, turning round from his desk, that was drawn before the window of his bay-parlour. And he spoke in rather an impatient tone, for he was busy writing letters, and did not care to be interrupted. As Gander knew.

"It's young Mr. Owen of Harebell Farm," replied Gander.

"What does he want?" questioned Sir Dene. "Is it particular?"

"Don't know, sir," returned Gander. "He came to the door, and he asked could he be let see Sir Dene: I told him I'd come and ask."

"Show him in," said Sir Dene.

This colloquy occurred just about the time that Master Jarvis had been soothed to tranquillity on the sofa with some jam at his elbow, as already described, and that the unlucky Tom was on the run towards home from Arde Hall. For the day is not yet over, and we must go back an hour, or so, in it: it is not practicable for the cleverest author living to describe two series of events at once, although they may have taken place at one and the same moment of time.

William Owen appeared, shown in by Gander: and the baronet shook hands with him without rising, and motioned him to a chair. He always shook hands with his better class of tenants. As to any other recognition, or symptom of cordiality, William Owen did not get it, and did not in the least presume to wish for or expect it. Sir Dene had practically forgotten that there was any link whatever between them, save that of landlord and tenant: the past connection might have absolutely faded out of his thoughts ere this, but for the existence of Geoffry and Maria's child.

The business that William Owen had come upon surprised Sir Dene: and he stared at the young man—seated before him in the opposite chair, his hat between his knees—while he listened to it. William Owen wished to transfer the lease of Harebell Farm to another tenant, if Sir Dene would permit. Not at present: perhaps not for a long while to come: but he wished to do it as soon as the time when he *could* do it should arrive.

"As long as my mother lives, sir, I must stay where I am, for she would not like to go out of the house; neither would I disturb her by asking it. But when she shall have left us—and she thinks herself that it mayn't be over long first now—then I shall be glad to give it up, and leave the place altogether."

"What fault have you to find with the farm, Mr. Owen?" distantly queried Sir Dene.

"None, sir. It's as good land as ever I'd wish to cultivate. That's not the reason."

"What is the reason then?"

William Owen seemed at fault for a reply. Sir Dene noticed that a look of pain sat on his refined and pleasant face.

"You must have some reason, Mr. Owen, for wishing to quit a productive farm."

"True, Sir Dene; I have. But it is one that is quite private to myself. I can't speak of it, even to you, sir."

Sir Dene looked at him. The same contraction of pain was in the

face ; the same tone of distress lay in the voice. He greatly wondered what could be the matter. William Owen saw the puzzled surprise : and just for a moment, the thought crossed him that he would speak out fully to Sir Dene. But the impulse faded again in a feeling that lay between shame and sensitiveness. Perhaps had Sir Dene been simply his landlord as he was of other tenants, and no more, the disclosure might have been made : but that past connection caused William Owen to be always retiring and reticent. In his sensitive nature, he would not have pushed himself forward for the world, or presumed in the slightest degree.

"I have no fault to find with the farm or the house or the land, sir ; but I must leave it, for all that. I can't stay in it. And I'd be glad to know beforehand that you will allow me to do this, so as to have my mind at rest. As long as mother is there, there I must be : but when she's gone, I shall go elsewhere."

"Do I understand that you will leave the neighbourhood entirely ?"

"Yes, Sir Dene. And get as many miles from it as I can."

"What has it done to you ?"

William Owen stroked the nap of his white beaver hat with his gloved forefinger : for he had dressed himself as a gentleman to hold this interview with Sir Dene—and he looked like one too. He seemed to be considering what answer he could make to the question.

"It is just that—what it has done to me—that I am unable to tell, sir," he at length replied. "It is an unfortunate and painful affair altogether ; and I can't talk of it."

"Suppose I do not release you from the farm ?" said Sir Dene. "What then ?"

"But I hope you will do it, sir. As to what then, I'm sure I don't know what I could do. Perhaps you'd let me underlet it."

"Are you going out of the farming business ?"

"Not at all, Sir Dene. I like it : add to that, I don't know any other. I shall meet with a farm elsewhere : perhaps in Dorsetshire."

"You'll not get a better than this. If it's small, it's good."

"And I don't expect to, Sir Dene. If this becomes vacant, there'll be plenty of good tenants glad to snap it up. Were it known that I thought of leaving it, they'd be here to-morrow. But I'd rather there was no stir made at all about it, sir : I'd like, when the time comes, to be away and gone before it was as much as known abroad that I was leaving. That's why I am asking you to promise to let it be ceded to Philip Tillett ; when this time shall come : to let me go out and him go in. The farm could not have a better tenant, Sir Dene, than he."

Sir Dene knew that much. A better tenant than William Owen himself : in-so-much as that he was a man of larger capital. Philip Tillett was a thoroughly good farmer.



"It seems to me that he will have to wait an indefinite time," remarked Sir Dene. "Mrs. Owen may get better."

"He is quite content to wait, sir, whether it's for weeks or whether it's for years. The farm he is in belongs to his uncle, and he can go out of it at any time. He likes the present one very well; but he'd like Harebell Farm better."

"Does he know why you are leaving?"

"Yes, sir, I told him. No one else knows, not even mother."

There ensued a short silence. Sir Dene was thinking this a curious kind of application. As in truth it was. William Owen, who held a long lease of Harebell Farm, was asking to be allowed to cede it provisionally to Mr. Philip Tillett. Provisionally on the death of his invalid mother. When she should die—and he acknowledged that it might be weeks or months, or it might be years first, for that's what the doctors said—then he wished to walk out of it, leaving Mr. Tillett to walk in.

"Would Tillett take to the stock?" abruptly questioned Sir Dene, when he had arrived at this point in his mental summary of events.

"To all things as they stand, sir; household furniture included," replied William Owen. "He knows about what the value of everything is as well as I do, and he is a just man. We shouldn't quarrel over that."

There was something in the young man's refined features, in his gentle manners, that put Sir Dene in mind of poor Maria, as he had seen her that New Year's Eve when he broke in without ceremony on the Malvern lodgings. Had he wished to refuse this thing, he could not, with that remembrance upon him.

"Well," he said, rising in intimation that the sitting was over, "I will give my consent to this, Mr. Owen. You have my word. Though I wish you had freely told me your motive for leaving. Stay! Have you got into any trouble? Is it that?"

"None whatever, I assure you, Sir Dene," was William Owen's reply, his sensitive face slightly flushing. "Circumstances over which I have no control, and could not have any, are driving me away. I wish it had been otherwise."

"Then, until there shall be the last change in your mother, things go on as they are, and you remain my tenant?"

"If you please, sir. I thank you truly for your kindness to me, Sir Dene."

Sir Dene shook hands, and William Owen let himself out at the room door. He was just in time, as the reader has heard, to see Lady Lydia horsewhip Tom. Hearing the cries, Sir Dene walked out also. And when the affair was over, and he went back to the room, he found that the young man followed him. Sir Dene was surprised: and William Owen shut the door.

"I crave your pardon, Sir Dene, for presuming to interfere—but I would like to ask another favour. Let the poor little boy come home to *us*. I'll bring him up and do for him as if he were my own."

Sir Dene's face flushed angrily. The request seemed to reflect on the hospitality of Beechhurst Dene.

"Come home to you!" he exclaimed. "The boy's home is here, Mr. Owen."

"Yes, sir, I know. I know that Beechhurst Dene is a very different home from any I could hope to give him. But at least he'd have kind treatment with us, Sir Dene."

"What is it you would imply?" asked Sir Dene haughtily.

"I don't presume to imply anything, sir; but what I know, I know. Hardly a day passes, but the child is insulted and put upon, very often beaten. Not by you, sir; not, I feel sure, within your knowledge; but by those about you. The best is being done to break his heart and his spirit."

In the gentlest and most respectful tone possible William Owen was saying this. Somehow Sir Dene felt mollified. The child was Geoffrey's child, and he did not like to hear of his heart or his spirit being on the road to breakage.

"He has been very naughty at times of late, very; and when he is so he must be corrected. The boy seems quite changed. Spare the rod, and spoil the child, you know."

"Sir Dene, I believe the child to be one of the very best children that ever lived: he is good and truthful as the day——"

"They say he has taken to tell stories," interrupted Sir Dene. "I can't credit it, though."

"No, Sir Dene, believe me, he never does tell stories. What I fear is, that others tell them and lay it upon him—though of course it is not my place to say as much. He is regarded as an unwelcome interloper here, and treated accordingly. There's not a servant in your house, Sir Dene, but could bear testimony to this if you questioned them—though they might not like to confess it. He is a truthful, honourable, upright little lad: I don't think he could tell a lie if bribed to it. Witness just now how he spoke up Yes, when asked if he was the first to hit Master Clanwaring. The boy has no chance here. I wish you would let me have him, sir."

"It is out of the question," sharply replied Sir Dene, feeling vexed and annoyed at more things than one. And William Owen took the answer and departed by the back entrance.

It has been said that close upon this door the trees and shrubs grew thick, almost like a wilderness. Branching off from hence on the right a path called the privet walk (a high privet hedge running along on either side it) led round to the front; while the straight path that led direct to Harebell Lane, bore somewhat to the left. William Owen was

taking this latter way, when he saw Squire Arde coming along the shady privet walk. Mr. Arde made a sign, and William turned to meet him.

"Is Mrs. Owen worse?" was the question put. "I saw Priar hastening up your way just now."

"My mother? No; not worse than usual," was the answer. "He was not coming to our house, that I am aware of."

"Oh well, I'm glad of that. I am afraid though, that on the whole she is very ill."

"Yes, sir, there's no doubt of that."

Never presuming, never self-asserting, William Owen generally called Squire Arde "sir." They were, or had been, brothers-in-law; but he did not attempt to ignore the social distance between them. George Arde in the old days had been above his sister: he was a great man now in local estimation, on a level with Sir Dene Clanwaring and such as he. Neither did Mr. Arde forget their distance: something in his manner betrayed that: nevertheless they liked each other very well, and were on intimate, not to say confidential, terms whenever they met. Standing there together in the narrow privet walk, the young man told Mr. Arde what his errand had been at Sir Dene's—the remarks on his mother's state of health perhaps inducing it.

"Tillett to take to the farm as it stands as soon as anything happens to her, and you to go out of it and quit the place altogether!" repeated the Squire in amazement. "Well now, why is this, William Owen?"

And William Owen told him—told him what he had not chosen to disclose to Sir Dene. And however the reader may feel inclined to cast ridicule on the cause, he may not disbelieve the fact: for for no other reason did William Owen quit Harebell Farm. Speaking in a whisper, his pale face wearing again its marks of pain, he breathed it into Mr. Arde's ear. The troubled spirit of his father, haunting the precincts of the farm, was driving him away from it.

"He has been dead now seven years and some months, Squire Arde; and people talked of its walking for more than three of those years before I ever saw it, or believed it. Altogether I've seen it three times: the last was on Sunday night. News was brought to the farm that a poor houseless woman had crept into that shed on the two-acre meadow to die. I went off to see about it: and there, hovering in and around the grove, was the spirit, in the same place where I had seen it twice before. I saw it clearly: 'twas a very light night."

Squire Arde remembered what a bright moon had shone on Sunday night. He was not a superstitious man; but nothing could be further from his thoughts than to meet this communication with contempt: others, worthy of credibility, had said just the same as William Owen.

"I can't make it out, William," he said. "Are you *sure* that your eyesight was not deceived by some tree or other?"

The young man shook his head. "What I saw was undoubtedly the very figure and image of my father, looking as he used to look in life. He seemed to have a coat buttoned-up round him—about that I can't be sure: it was indistinct—but he wore that same queer magpie cap he was drowned in; and his silver beard was never plainer. I was thinking of nothing but the woman in the shed, and what could be done with her at that time o' night; and there, as I went along toward the grove, the figure stood facing me, right in the moonbeams."

"It is strangely singular!" exclaimed the Squire. "The queerest thing I've met with in all my experience."

"Stay on the place, I cannot," said William Owen. "It unnerves me for everything—though I should feel ashamed to acknowledge it to most people. The very moment my poor mother sets me at liberty by leaving me alone in the world, I shall get away. But for her sake, I'd go to-morrow."

He had turned to walk towards Harebell Lane, Mr. Arde strolling by his side. William Owen changed the subject to that of the child: mentioning the cruel chastisement he had witnessed, and what he had subsequently said to Sir Dene.

"When I shall be gone from the place, perhaps you'll give the poor lad a kind word now and then, sir. He'll have nobody else to do it. I'd have liked to take him home to Harebell Farm: Sir Dene was mortally offended at me for asking it."

"Lady Lydia and her children put upon him and thrust him into the background," remarked Mr. Arde. "She has got a nasty temper of her own."

They parted. William Owen pursuing his way home, where he found Mary Barber making a miniature lard-cake for Tom: Mr. Arde entering the bay-parlour at Beechhurst Dene. Sir Dene Clanwaring was in one of his testy humours, and said a few fractious words about "Things going cross in the house."

"Young Owen has been taking upon himself to tell me that the child—my boy Geoffry's son—is not well treated here!" he cried in an explosive tone. "Fancy his assurance, Arde!"

"Then I'll take up the word for him, Sir Dene, at the risk of your attributing assurance to me," spoke up Mr. Arde, half laughing. "In this instance, at any rate, the child did not deserve chastisement—though I fancy somebody else may. If that ill-natured young Jarvey came home with a false tale—as I conclude he did—it is he who ought to have got the whipping."

"What do you know about it, Arde?"

Mr. Arde related the truth of the day's fray—as he had heard it but now from his haymakers, in coming through the field: and, as he remarked, they were unbiassed witnesses. He spoke out far more freely than William Owen had ventured to do, telling a few home truths about

Tom and Jarvey, and the Dene in general, including the baronet himself. Sir Dene's blue eyes opened (in more senses than one) and his lips took a haughty curve as he listened.

"A false, ill-conditioned young rascal!" spoke he of Jarvey. "It's the first time I ever knew a Clanwaring could concoct a deliberate lie."

"His mother is not a Clanwaring," observed Squire Arde dryly. And the baronet gave a kind of assenting sniff.

"No, *he* has nothing of the Clanwaring about him at present," pursued the Squire. "Little Tom's one to the backbone: he is his father over again. They look upon the poor child as being in the way here, you see: don't let them quite break his spirit. There, that's all, Sir Dene. Good morning."

Break his spirit! The same words that William Owen had used. Had Jarvey been there at the moment, Sir Dene might have three parts killed him. With the red flush dyeing his face, he strode forth to the presence of Lady Lydia. She was in the drawing-room.

Sir Dene controlled his temper, and spoke quietly. Quietly, but very peremptorily. He touched slightly upon the treatment of Tom by her and her children generally—the scandal he found it excited in the neighbourhood, the discomfort it brought to the Dene. And he said that for the future she had better take lodgings at Worcester during holiday time, and have her children there with her.

Lady Lydia's blood turned cold: was it *possible* that her footing at the Dene was being imperilled? In her mind's confusion, in her angry passion, she did the worst thing she could have done—began to cast slurs on Tom and his birth.

Were *her* darling children to be discarded for that low-born brat, whose mother—

"Why what the devil do you mean, madam?" interrupted Sir Dene, too much put out altogether to weigh his words. "Low-born! You are speaking of my own grandson, Tom Clanwaring."

"He is not fit company for my boys, Sir Dene."

"If what I am told be true, they are not fit company for him—one of them at any rate," retorted Sir Dene. "You can take them out of it as soon as you please, my lady."

Her very lips turned white. Before this, she had believed she had acquired firm hold on Sir Dene. He looked like one not to be trifled with just now. An angry man, there, pacing the carpet.

"You—would—turn my children out for *him*?" she resumed, in a subdued gasping tone, partly put on, partly the result of the low-lying fear. "Oh, Sir Dene!"

"My lady, it is this. The home is my grandson Tom's; it was his home before any of you came to it; it shall be his home as long as it remains mine. I was willing to let it be your children's also: but it seems the plan does not answer. It is my pleasure that Tom Clan-

wareing shall be honoured in this house, ay, and be loved too, at least as much as anybody else is. Your children will not do this; they have taken up a prejudice against him: therefore there is only one alternative—they must spend their summer and winter holidays elsewhere."

No mistake now. He was in real earnest. My lady, smoothing her black hair from her pale face all damp with emotion, changed her tactics on the instant. She would enquire into it, she meekly said: if Jarvis had been knowingly unkind to the child or told fibs of him, he should be punished. For her own part, she had always thought Tom a sweet little angel. Children would fight, though; boys would be boys. But the little child should be her best and special charge for the future, now that she understood Sir Dene's wishes.

My lady gathered her three children in her room that same evening to a private interview, and treated them to sundry tutorings. Doved also received some hints. The result was, that Tom found a change: there was no more open ill-treatment, no further complaints of him carried to Sir Dene. And nothing else was said about the exodus.

But my lady's resolution—to *put Tom down*—had not changed: she only altered her tactics. As the time passed on, this little episode was forgotten by Sir Dene. Easy and good-natured to a fault, was he; Lady Lydia's sway over him when he was at Beechurst Dene increased, during his frequent absences she reigned absolutely. And Tom Clanwaring was taught and trained to look upon himself as a poor dependent, kept at the place out of charity; an interloper, but not a son. And Tom insensibly fell into these views of himself in all belief, and learnt humility. More specious than deceit itself was the Lady Lydia Clanwaring.

#### END OF THE FIRST PART.

(To be continued.)





## OF HOPE.

FEW things in life should be cultivated and valued more than hope. Hope, not only as concerning the future state : that, it is to be trusted, all men possess : but hope as regards the present, and the to-come, of our little narrow world. Hope of the constitution and temperament—physical hope, if you will—without which no man can be happy ; no man can arm himself with the amount of energy and determination necessary to the fulfilment of his work in life ; and the progress and outpouring of that desire to do some good in the world, which we may well believe is, by divine wisdom, implanted into the nature of most human beings.

Man's great desire is to be happy. It may be termed an instinct. Each possesses it just as much as he possesses that of self-preservation ; which latter has been called the first law of nature. But man, as he grows higher in the scale of the moral and the intellectual, is less obedient to these laws of nature. He grows nearer to the likeness in which he was originally created—the likeness of God. The faculty called instinct dies out, because it gives place to a loftier intelligence and state of being. Instinct was designed as a substitute for reason. We do not now refer to that subtle and refined instinct which lies at the bottom of the highest orders of mankind, but the instinct which we find in intelligences of a lower order who are incapable of exercising the greatest faculty of the mind—that of reasoning.

But no intelligence however great, no faculty however exalted, can be truly happy without hope. A man devoid of it physically, can never be perfectly contented. He may be thrown into raptures by some temporary excitement, but the re-action will inevitably set in. Hope has saved many from shipwreck ; the want of it has driven many to despair, and perhaps to a sad end amidst the dark waters of life.

"Hope deferred maketh the heart sick." So spoke the wisest of mankind, and so has been the experience of—ah ! how many !—since the words were first recorded. In the very syllable itself—short, quiet, liquid as it is—in its very sound—there is either the sweetness of life, or the misery of despair and death, according as it falls upon the heart. A talisman opening to some a full tide of expectancy—to others the blackness of night.

There are perhaps not many natures utterly devoid of it. Some may possess a compensating power, such as a sanguine temperament, which will often carry a man through the world successfully who has in himself but a very small portion of hope. They are very different things, these two gifts—or whatever name may be given to them. The one is calm, quiet, and rational under all circumstances ; it will quickly surmount obstacles, overcome impediments in cool blood, and make

its way under the dominion of common sense. The sanguine temperament, on the contrary, must be in a state of constant excitement; calmness does not suit it; it is not the food upon which it exists; and in such a condition it can do but little. Like sunshine on a cold day, heat is wanting to bring fruit to ripeness.

But the sanguine temperament which is at the same time excessively hopeful, is in many respects equally unfortunate. It resembles some medicines, of which a little is good, but a great deal kills. These are the natures that, in one sense, make a noise in the world: men who in their wild ideas go into every description of mad scheme, and are continually coming down with a crash; dragging along with them the weaker natures that have been overcome by their impulsiveness; their confident way of speaking; their loud protestations of success in their Utopian fancies.

There will always be men to lead, and men to be led: always strength and weakness. And the sanguine-hopeful temperament, though perhaps the very reverse of strength, is as often as not mistaken for it. Just as now and then we wake up at night in the light of a full moon, and fancy it is day-break. Or as, in the dark, we occasionally mistake the stream of a still-flowing river for a pathway and step upon it, and find ourselves immersed in the treacherous water.

These sanguine-hopeful natures are full of self-belief. They don't take you in deliberately, any more than they deliberately take in themselves. And the misfortune is, that no amount of failures, no losses repeated again and again, will open their eyes. It is never they or their judgment that failed: but circumstances that were against them. Smoothing their plumage, they go on again, and plunge into some project wilder than before: and, moreover, carry some of the world with them. As a rule we are given to believe in the self-asserting of our fellow men; to what Carlyle calls hero-worship.

Man is, after all, a very fallible, impressionable creature; finite and limited in his worldly powers. He is strongest in these attributes which most nearly approach him to his Creator: but how frequently is this better part of his being left to rust, if not to die out altogether! It is under this sad state of things that the man who has no hope in himself constitutionally, falls into despair; and sometimes puts an end to all by that terrible, almost-to-be-nameless tragedy, enacted now and again since the days of one, of whom it was recorded, "It were better he had never been born."

When you see persons always happy you may be sure, whether they know it or not, that they have a large portion of hope in their temperament. It causes them to look on the bright side of things, even in trouble. On the contrary, those less happily gifted meet trouble half way; they see always the dark side of the picture, and are saved from despairing only by that strong religious faith which tells them that

there is a Divine Hand overruling all the events of their life for their present or eternal welfare.

But there is no battle harder than the battle that has to be fought by a religious man, destitute of hope, suffering under the pressure of long-continued cares. By this expression is meant the cares and troubles of the world, not those sorrows which affect the heart only. The latter have a subduing, purifying, elevating influence upon a well-regulated mind and spirit; though the troubles and sorrows of the world are trying to the very best of us. Trying especially to the nerves and temper. Unless care be taken they will make you irritable and gloomy; sometimes even unkind. This is their tendency; and it is only the better nature that is in man that will enable him to fight and conquer the influence. Without this, such natures grow weary of life. Crushed down, despairing, seeing all things in the darkest possible light, they think death preferable to this awful, terrible life; and they sometimes seek it. Had Chatterton possessed more hope, he would never have committed that irredeemable act which perhaps robbed the world of a great treasure, and certainly hurried a soul full of fine thoughts and aspirations unto its last account.

“One more unfortunate, weary of breath,  
Rashly importunate, gone to her death.”

But had she not felt that all hope was over in this world, Tom Hood would somehow have been compelled to bring her back to life.

“All those who pass through these portals, leave hope behind.” As much as to say that without hope all possible misery must be the consequence, or result.

That which constitutes a part of the great punishment of the lost after this life, is said to be the utter extinction of hope, coupled with remorse. Remorse alone is terrible to bear; but with hope, though far distant, though of something vague, unknown, indefinite, it is possible, just possible, to be endured. Without it, a more awful state of existence cannot be conceived. This is one reason why the Roman Catholic persuasion has so much consolation in it for the human heart. Their doctrine of Purgatory forbids the extinction of Hope. It may take hundreds or thousands of years to purge and purify a soul steeped in sin, but if it is to be free at last, to be ransomed, happy to all eternity, then welcome present torment. Hope is not dead; all is not lost; the gate of Heaven is not closed for ever. And so this faith appeals to the most powerful of human attributes and emotions, forcibly so to the impulsive, shallow-natured, but good-hearted French, who of all people in the world would be nothing without hope.

And this may be a reason, perhaps, why the Romish belief has for centuries flourished, and obtained such hold upon some of the people of Europe—because it appeals directly to one of the strongest and weakest points of their nature.

A drowning man may clutch at a straw; and, for a moment, as hope once more feebly rises within him, he makes a strong effort to save himself, only relaxing as hope fades away again.

It is also a reason, perhaps, why, at the present day, so many are endeavouring to prove, even amongst our own Protestant sects, that there is really no such thing as eternal misery and torment. "Let us do anything, think anything," they argue, "but that which for ever extinguishes all hope:" and perhaps there is not a human being living who would not in his heart of hearts echo the sentiment. So utterly impossible is it to exaggerate the overwhelming misery of one to whom all hope is lost.

As with the little English syllable, so with the longer word in the French language—*Espérance*. There is no word can conjure up a brighter vision before you: especially under certain conditions. It is altogether beautiful. It throws a glow over the heart that can scarcely be exceeded even by that verb which, since the commencement of the world, has been conjugated with so much heart-throbbing—*Aimer*. And its proverbs are some of the best and greatest. "*Espérance en Dieu*." What can be at once grander and sweeter?

But hope, it has already been said, in regard to this world quite as much as the next, is essential to man's happiness and welfare. Therefore as much as possible it should be cultivated and encouraged. And if a man knows that he is deficient in this, he ought to keep a guard upon himself; and as far as he can put away from view the dark side of life. Let him make this his business, deliberately and systematically. A great deal may be done by trying. To a considerable extent man may, by patience and perseverance, and by seeking that religious help—of which we all know so much that it is unnecessary to allude to it here, being, as it is, the beginning and the end of whatsoever is great and good and worthy—man may, under these circumstances, to a vast extent correct and overcome the weaknesses of his nature, so that after a time he shall not know himself for the same that he once was. We have reason given to us, and will, and strength; every element necessary for battle; and it is only those who by perseverance in ill-doing have weakened their moral nature, who lose the power of struggling.

If a man is always looking on the dark side of life, he may be sure that he has not much hope in him by nature. And if at the same time he be deficient of veneration, he will have a very hard fight of it, perhaps to the last hour of his life. Let him beware. He will be subject to fits of the greatest melancholy; and times will arise when the earth, that is in truth so fair and beautiful, will wear for him the sombre hue of the grave. At such moments let him be thankful for the religious element that is implanted in man, for it has saved many a one from an act that can never be recalled.

Happily there is nearly always a compensating power in man. If he be deficient in one gift, or attribute, or quality, he will especially possess another to make up for it. For example, if he has but a small share of benevolence or veneration, there will probably be given to him a large amount of conscientiousness to restore the balance of his moral nature. This is the rule. Nature, it is said, is always true to herself. In other words, the Almighty, if He denies man one attribute, will give him another, to enable him to do battle with himself in his walk through life. Now and then, perhaps, a man is found with his evil nature altogether predominant, and such men have had their names handed down to posterity stained with crime. These are quite the exception. But there is no doubt that the man who possesses both hope and veneration only in a small degree, is unhappily constituted. His large share of conscientiousness will prevent him from giving way; will keep him right and straight; but at the cost of a constant struggle: and even under the brighter circumstances of life nothing can save him from occasional seasons of gloom and despondency.

Natures that are called sunny know nothing of this—fortunately for them; for it is one of the most unhappy of human experiences. Here we realize that Divine Wisdom which conceals from us the future, and prevents us from knowing what even a day may bring forth. Many, did they see what lies before them, would lie down and die; under the influence of despair, life would seem too intolerable to be borne. Anticipation is at all times far worse than reality; to dread a thing, more terrible than actually to suffer it; though of course even in this there are exceptions to the rule.

“ Art thou low and sick and dreary?  
Is thy spirit sunk and weary  
With its fight against the ills of life that seem to fill the air?  
Gird thy loins once more and try,—  
The stout heart wins the victory,  
But never dark despair.

“ Does temptation strong approach thee?  
Does some secret wrong reproach thee  
With its conscience-voice accusing thee of more than thou canst bear?  
Before high heaven cleanse thy breast;  
“Go, sin no more,” and thou’lt find rest,  
But never in despair.

“ Have dark clouds thy life o’ershaded?  
Have thy bright hopes waned and faded  
In the mist that seemed to shroud from thee the beautiful and fair?  
Oh, think! the morning follows night,  
Behind the darkest cloud is light—  
But never in despair.

“ Has death’s icy hand bereft thee?  
Have thy dear ones slept and left thee,  
Far to wander in the spirit-land where never enters care?  
Well, seek the One to be thy guide,  
And you may yet live side by side:  
But not if you despair.

“ Has thy love of man grown chary?  
 Has thy trust in him grown wary?  
 Hast thou coldly turn'd a deafen'd ear to sin's repentant prayer?  
 Think that none can enter Heaven  
 Who has not others' sins forgiven,  
 And saved them from despair.

“ Art thou old, and grey, and drooping?  
 Is thy form with years' weight stooping?  
 Art thou hastening to the realms of death, and fear to enter there?  
 Then think of life beyond the grave,  
 Believe in Mercy's power to save,  
 And cast away despair.”\*

This is a true picture of what man would be without hope. Therefore in all circumstances hope must be encouraged, and where the path seems darkest there let hope come out with her strong anchor, and grapple with the firm rocks that are beneath the waves. Its importance cannot be over-rated. The difference between the work accomplished by a hopeful man, and the work accomplished by one who has not the blessing, is wonderful. It is often just the difference between life and death; between success and failure; between good and evil. Whilst some, without it, are ready to cry out in their agony for the wings of a dove, to fly away into the wilderness and be at rest; others who have it, even under the same circumstances, will be buoyant and active; always hoping or waiting, as it were, for the moving of the waters. And so perhaps will tide themselves over many a troubled sea into the calm of a safe haven, where the dark days that have been may be forgotten in a full sunshine.

Thus, it is not only a duty to encourage a spirit of hope, but a privilege. And that man is certainly very much to be pitied or envied who can afford to make light of his privileges; to accept or pass them by, as it may please him.

\* J. St. Clement.





## BURSTING-UP.

THERE have been fiery August days in plenty : but never a worse than the one I am going to tell of. It was Wednesday : and we were sitting under the big tree of the lawn at Dyke Manor. A tree that would have done you good only to look at on a blazing day a thick weeping ash, with a cool and shady green space inside it, large enough for a dozen chairs round, and a table in the middle:

The chairs and the table were there now. On the latter stood iced cider and some fizzing lemonade : uncommonly good, both, on that thirsty day. Mr. Brandon, riding by on his cob, had called in to see us ; and sat between me and Mrs. Todhetley. She was knitting something in shades of green wool. The squire had a straw hat on ; Tod lay on the grass outside, in the shade of the laurels ; Hugh and Lena stood at the bench by him, blowing soap-bubbles and chattering like magpies.

"Well, I don't know," said old Brandon, taking a good draught of the lemonade. "It often happens with me if I plan to go anywhere much beforehand, that when the time comes I am not well enough for it."

Mr. Todhetley had been telling him that he thought he should take the lot of us to the sea-side for a week or two in September ; and suggested that he should go too. It had been a frightfully hot summer, and everybody felt worn out.

"Where shall you go to ?" continued Mr. Brandon.

"Somewhere in Wales, I think," said the Squire. "It's easier of access from here. Aberystwith, perhaps."

"Not much of a sea at Aberystwith," cried Mr. Brandon in his squeaky voice.

"Well, it's not quite a Gibraltar Rock, Brandon : but it does for us. The last time we went to the sea-side : it's three years ago now——"

"Four," mildly put in Mrs. Todhetley, looking up from her wools.

"Four, is it ! Time flies. Well, it was Aberystwith then ; and we were very comfortably lodged. It was at a Mrs. Noon's, I remember ; and—who's coming now ?"

A dash in at the entrance gate was heard—which a little startled Mr. Brandon, lest whatever it was should dash over his cob, tied to the gate-post—and then the smooth run of light wheels on the gravel.

"Look out and see who it is, Johnny."

Parting a place amid the leaves of the weeping-ash, I saw a light, elegant, sweeping open carriage, driven by a groom in livery ; a gentleman seated beside him in dainty gloves.

"Why that's the Clement-Pells' little carriage !" exclaimed Mrs. Todhetley, who had been looking out for herself.

"And that's Mr. Clement-Pell in it," said I.

"Oh," said Mr. Brandon. "I'll go then." But the Squire put his arm out to keep him where he was.

Tod did the honours. Went to receive him, and brought him to us under the tree. The children stopped blowing their bubbles to stare at Mr. Clement-Pell as he crossed the lawn. It struck me that just a shade of annoyance appeared in his face when he saw so many of us there. Shaking hands, he sat down by Mr. Todhetley, observing that it was some time since he saw us. It was six weeks, or so : for we had not happened to meet since that visit of mine and Tod's to his house at Kensington. All the family were back again now at Parrifer Hall : and we were going to a grand entertainment there on the following day, Thursday. An open-air fête, the invitations had said.

"You have been very busy lately, Mr. Clement-Pell," observed the Squire. "I've not been able to get to see you to thank you for the kindness of your folks to my boys in town. Twice I called at your chief bank, but you were not visible."

"I have been unusually busy," was the answer. "Business gets worse ; that is, larger ; every day. I have had to be about a good deal besides ; so that with one thing and another, my time has been more than fully occupied. I am very glad your young men enjoyed themselves with us in London," he added in a hearty tone.

Mr. Brandon gave me such a look that for the life of me I could not say a word in answer. The London visit, taking it comprehensively, had not been one of enjoyment : but Clement-Pell had no suspicion of the truth.

"Rather a *rapid* life, that London life," remarked Mr. Brandon dryly. And I went hot all over, for fear he might be going to let out things to the Squire.

"Rapid?" repeated Mr. Clement-Pell. "Well, so it is ; especially for us business men."

Mr. Brandon coughed, but said no more. The Squire pressed the drinkables on Mr. Clement-Pell. He'd have nothing to say to the cider—'twould make him hotter, he thought—but took a drop of the fizzing lemonade. As he was putting the glass down, Mrs. Todhetley asked whether the fête at his house on the morrow was to be as grand and large as reported. And the shade of annoyance, seen before, most certainly again crossed Clement-Pell's face at the question.

"I do not really know much about it," he answered. "These affairs are my wife's, not mine."

"And perhaps you don't over much care for them," put in the Squire, who had seen the expression.

"I should like them very much, if I had more time to spare for them," said Mr. Clement-Pell, playing with his handsome chain and

seals. "We men of large undertakings must be content to work ourselves, and to let our wives and daughters play. However, I hope I shall get an hour or two for this one to-morrow."

"What are to be the amusements?" inquired Mrs. Todhetley.

"The question is, rather, what they are not to be," smiled Mr. Clement-Pell. "I heard the girls talking about it with one another last night. Dancing, music, archery, fortune-telling——"

"Something, I suppose, of what may be called a fancy-fair," she interrupted.

"Just so. A fancy-fair without the money-taking. At any rate, I make no doubt it will be pleasant: and I sincerely hope to see you all at it. *You* will come, I trust, Mr. Brandon. These things are not in your ordinary line, I am aware, but——"

"I have neither the health nor the inclination for them," said Mr. Brandon quite shrilly, stopping him before he could finish.

"But I do trust you will make an exception in favour of us to-morrow, I was about to say. Mrs. Clement-Pell and the Miss Clement-Pells will be so pleased to see you."

"Thank you," said old Brandon, in a short tone, only just saved from one of rudeness. "I must be going, Squire."

He got up as he spoke, shook hands with Mrs. Todhetley only, nodded to the rest of us, and set off across the lawn. Children liked him in spite of his voice and his dry manner, and of course Hugh and Lena, pipes and soap-suds and all, attended him to the gate.

As the brown cob went trotting off, and the Squire was coming back again—for he had gone too—Mr. Clement-Pell met him half way across the lawn; and then they both went indoors together.

"Clement-Pell must want something," said Mrs. Todhetley. "Johnny, do you notice how very aged and worn he is? It never struck me until to-day. He looks quite grey."

"Well, that's because he is getting so. I shall be grey some time."

"But I don't mean that kind of greyness, Johnny; grey hairs. His *face* looks grey."

"'Twas the shade of these green leaves, good mother."

"Well—perhaps it might be," she doubtfully agreed, looking up.

"What a grand fête it is to be, Johnny!"

"You'll have to put on your best bib-and-tucker. That new dress you bought for the Stirlings' christening."

"I should if I went. But the fact is, Johnny, I and Mr. Todhetley have made up our minds not to go, I fancy. We were talking together about it this morning. However—we shall see when to-morrow comes."

"I'd not be you then. That will be too bad."

"These open-air fêtes are not in our way, Johnny. Dancing, and archery, and fortune-telling are not much in the way of us old people. You young ones think them delightful—as we did once. Hugh! Lena!

what *is* all that noise about? You are not to take her bowl, Hugh: keep to your own. Joseph, please, just part them."

Joe accomplished it by boxing the two. In the midst of the scrimmage, Mr. Clement-Pell came out. He did not cross the grass again to Mrs. Todhetley; just called out a good day in getting into his carriage, and lifted his hat as he drove away.

"I say, father, what did he want with you?" asked Tod, as the Squire came sauntering back, the skirts of his light coat held behind him.

"That's my business, Joe," said the Squire. "Mind your own."

Which was a checkmate for Tod. The truth was, he had been uneasily wondering whether it might not be his business. That is, whether Mr. Clement-Pell had obtained scent of that gambling of his up in London and had come to enlighten the Squire. Tod never felt safe upon the point: which, you see, was all owing to his lively conscience.

"What a beautiful little carriage that is!" said Mrs. Todhetley to the Pater. "It puts me in mind of a shell."

"Ay; must have cost a pretty penny, small though it is. Pell can afford these fancy things, with his extent of floating wealth."

In that city of seething crowds and seething wealth, London, where gigantic operations are the rule instead of the exception, and large fortunes are made daily, Mr. Clement-Pell would not have been thought much of; but in our simple country place, with its quiet experiences, Clement-Pell was just a wonder. His riches were great. His power of making money for himself and for others seemed elastic; and he was bowed down to as a reigning potentate,—a king,—an Olympian god.

You have heard of him before. He had come to a neighbouring town some years before as the manager of a small banking company, having given up, it was understood, a good law practice in London to undertake it. The small banking company grew into a large one under his management. Some of its superfluous hoards of gold were employed profitably: to lay down railroads; to work mines; to found colonies. All sorts of paying concerns were said to have some of Clement-Pell's money in them, and to bring him in cent. per cent. It was believed that if all the wealth of the East India Company and the Bank of England to boot had been poured into the hands of Clement-Pell, it could not have been more than he would be able to use to profit, so great were the outlets at his command. People fought with one another to get their money accepted by Mr. Clement-Pell. No wonder. The funds gave them a paltry three, or three-and-a-half, per cent. for it: Mr. Clement-Pell doubled the amount. So the funds lost the money, and Mr. Clement-Pell gained it. He was worshipped as the greatest benefactor that had ever honoured the country by settling down in it.

I think his manner went for something. It was so pleasant. The

world itself might have loved Mr. Clement-Pell. Deputations asked for his portrait to hang up in public buildings; individuals besought his photograph. Mrs. Clement-Pell was less liked: she was extravagant and haughty. It was said she was of very good family indeed, and she could not have looked down upon common people with more scorn had she been a born duchess. I'm sure no duchess ever gave herself the airs that Mrs. Clement-Pell did, or wore bonnets as fine.

When Mr. Clement-Pell opened a little branch bank at Church Dykely (as he had already done at two or three other small places), the parish at once ascended a few feet into the air. As Church Dykely in its insignificance had never possessed a bank before, it was naturally something to be proud of. The bank was a little house near to Duffham's, the doctor, with a door and one window; no larger premises being obtainable! The natives collected round to gaze, and marvel at the great doings destined to be enacted behind that shutting-out wire blind: and Mr. Clement-Pell was followed by a small tail of admiring rustics whenever he stepped abroad.

Church Dykely only got its branch in what might be called the later years, dating from the beginning of the Clement-Pell dynasty, and when he had made a far and wide name, and was in the full tide of his prosperity. After its establishment, it was, that he took Parriker Hall. This little branch bank was found to be a convenience to many people. It had a manager and a clerk; and Mr. Clement-Pell would condescend to be at it occasionally, chiefly on Mondays. He was popular with all classes: county gentlemen and rich farmers asked him to dinner; the poor got from him many a kind word and a handshake. Mrs. Clement-Pell dined with him at the gentlemen's tables, but she turned up her head at the farmers, and would not go near them. In short, take them for all in all, there was no family so grand in the county, or who made so much noise as the Clement-Pells. Their income was something enormous; and of course they might launch out if they liked. It had grown to be a saying among us "As rich as the Clement-Pells."

Mrs. Todhetley had said she supposed the entertainment would be something of a fancy-fair. We had not had an extensive experience of fancy-fairs in our county; but if they were all like this, I'd not mind going to one twice a week. The sky was blue, the wind still, the leaves of the green trees hardly fluttered. On the lawn the sun blazed down, hot and brilliant; but the groves were of a shady coolness. Since the place came in to Mr. Clement-Pell's occupancy, he had taken in part of a side field, and made the grounds more extensive. At least, Mrs. Clement-Pell had, which came to the same: spending money went for nothing with her. And why should it, when they had so much? If you swung yourself on to the top of an artificial mound of rock you could see over the high hedge. I did: and took a look at the chim-

neys of George Reed's cottage. You've not forgotten him ; and his trouble with Major Parriker. But for that trouble, the Clement-Pells would never have had the chance of occupying Parriker Hall.

'Twas as good as fairy-land. Flags hung about ; banners waved ; statues had decked themselves in garlands. The lawn and the walks were alive with company, the ladies in gala dresses all the colours of the rainbow. Dancing, shooting, flirting, talking, walking, sitting ; all was as gay as birds of paradise. There was a tent for the band, and another for refreshments, and no end of little marquees about for anything. One was a post-office ; where love-letters might be had for the asking. When I look back on that day now through the mist of years, it stands out as the gayest and sunniest left to memory. As to the refreshments—you may think of anything you like and know it was there. There was no regular meal at all throughout the afternoon and evening ; but you could begin eating and drinking when you went in if you chose, and never leave off till you left. The refreshment tent communicated with one of the doors of the house, through which fresh supplies came as they were wanted. All was cold. Fish done in jelly ; meats ; poultries ; pies, and substantial things of that kind ; all sorts of tarts and cakes and sweet things ; ices, syllabubs, creams ; wines, syrups, lemonades ; and champagne in abundance. Besides this, there was a tea and coffee marquee, where the kettles were kept always on the boil. Nobody could say the Clement-Pells spared pains or cost to entertain their guests right royally.

At the beginning, people showed themselves stiff and unapproachable, according to our English custom. Tod and I strolled about, feeling lonely enough, and staring around to take in the scene. The Clement-Pell carriages (the big barouche and the small affair that Mrs. Todhethley had called like a shell) came dashing up at intervals, graciously despatched to bring relays of guests who did not keep carriages of their own. Mrs. Clement-Pell stood on the lawn to receive them ; the Miss Clement-Pells with her. If I were able to describe their attire I would, it beat anything for gorgeousness I'd ever seen. Glistening skirts of silk under robes of beautiful lace ; fans in their hands and gossamer veils in their hair.

"I say, Tod, here they come !"

A sober carriage with its baronet's badge on the panels was driving slowly in. We knew it well : and its steady old horses and servants too. It was the Whitneys'. Rushing round a back path we were up when it stopped. Bill Whitney and his two sisters came tumbling out of it.

"It's going on to your house now, to take the trunk," said Helen, to us. "William has been most awfully tiresome : he would put his everyday boots and coat in our box, instead of bringing a portmanteau for himself."

"As if a fellow wanted a portmanteau for just one night !" exclaimed



Bill. "What you girls can have got in that big trunk, amazes me. I should say you are bringing your bed and pillows in it."

"It has only got our dresses for to-morrow morning in it, and that," retorted Helen, who liked to keep Bill in order and to domineer. "The idea of having to put in great clumsy dirty boots with *them*, and a rough coat smelling of smoke!"

"This is to be left here, I think, Miss Helen," said the footman, showing a small black leather bag.

"Goodness, yes; it has our combs and brushes in it," returned Helen, taking it and giving it to one of the Clement-Pell servants, together with two cloaks for the evening.

Tod went up to the coachman. "Look here, Pinner: the Squire says you had better stop at the Manor to bait the horses. You'll find him there, I daresay."

"Thank you, sir," said Pinner. "They'll be a bit blown if we goes straight off back."

The girls and Bill went up to the Clement-Pell receiving group, and were made much of. It was the first time they had visited the Pells, and their coming was regarded as a special honour. Sir John and Lady Whitney had declined: and it was arranged that Bill and his sisters should sleep at our house, and the carriage come for them the next day.

When they escaped from the Pells, we all sat down on a bench to look on. Helen Whitney began whispering about the Miss Pells' dresses.

"I never saw such beauties," she exclaimed. "I wonder what they cost?"

"Millions, I should say," cried Bill.

"These are but plain ugly old things beside *them*," grumbled Helen.

She meant her dress and Anna's. They had white spotted muslins on, tied with blue ribbons and blue buds in their bonnets. One of those other gorgeous robes was worth fifty times as much: but I know which set of girls looked the most lady-like.

"They are very beautiful," sighed Helen, with a spice of envy. "But too much for an affair like this."

"Not for them," said Bill stoutly. "The Clement-Pells could afford a robe of diamonds if they like. I'm not sure but I shall go in for one of the girls."

We went into the fortune-telling tent. It was full of people, screaming and laughing. A real gipsy with a swarthy skin and purple-black locks flowing down her back, was telling the fortunes. Helen had hers told when she could get a place, and was promised a lord for a husband and five-and-thirty grandchildren. At which the tent roared again, and Helen laughed too.

"And now it's your turn, my pretty little maid," said the sibyl to

Anna Whitney. And Anna, always modest and gentle, turned as red as a rose, and said she knew already as much of her own fortune as she desired to know at present.

"What's in *this* hand?" cried the gipsy, suddenly seizing upon Tod's big one, and devouring its lines with her eyes. "Nay, master; don't draw it away, for there's matter here, and to spare. You are not afraid, are you?"

"Not of you, my gipsy queen," gallantly answered Tod, resigning to her his palm. "Pray let my fate be as good as you can."

"It is a smooth hand," she went on, never having lifted her gaze from it, and as if she did not hear him. "Very smooth: you'll not have many of the cares and crosses of life. Nevertheless I see that you have been in some peril lately. And I should say it was connected with money. Debt."

There were not many things could bring the colour into Joseph Tod-hetley's face: but it matched then with the scarlet mantle the gipsy wore slung over her right shoulder. You might have heard a pin drop in the sudden hush. Anna's blue eyes were glancing shyly up through their long lashes.

"Peril of debt, or—perhaps—of—steepchasing," continued the sybil with intense deliberation; and at that the shouts of laughter broke out again through the tent, and Anna smiled. "Take you care of yourself, sir; for I perceive you will run into other perils before you settle down. You have neither caution nor foresight."

"*That's* true enough, I believe," said Tod, who was still red enough for a roost-cock. "Any more?"

"No more. For you are just one of those imprudent mortals who will never pay heed to friendly warnings of danger. Were I you, I'd keep out of the world till I grew older."

"Thank you," said Tod, laughing as much as the rest of them: and she threw away his hand.

"Johnny, that was a near shave," he whispered, putting his arm within mine when we had pushed our way out. "Was it all guesswork? Who the deuce is the woman?"

"I know who I think she is. The Pells' English governess, Miss Phebus."

"Nonsense!"

"I do. She has got herself up in character and dyed her skin and hair."

"Then by George, if it *is*, she must have gathered an inkling of that matter in London."

"I don't see how."

"Nor I. Johnny, some of these days I shall be bursting out with it to the Pater, and so get the weight off my mind."

"I shouldn't wonder. She said you have no caution."

"It's not pleasant, I can tell you, youngster, to live in the dread that

somebody else will bring it out to him. I'll go in for this next dance, I think. Where's Anna?"

Anna did not say no. She would never say no to anything *he* asked her, if I possessed the gift of divination. They joined the dancers; Bill and Helen went to the archery.

"And how are *you* enjoying it pray, Johnny Ludlow?"

The voice nearly shot me off the arm of the bench. For it was Mr. Brandon's. I don't think there was any living man I should have been so surprised at seeing at the fête as he.

"Why! Is it you, sir?"

"Yes, it's me, Johnny. You need not stare as if you thought me an intruder. I was invited."

"Yes, of course, sir. But I—I fancied you never came to such parties."

"Never was at one like this—unless I went to it in my sleep," he said, sitting down on the bench, and casting his eyes around. "I came to-day to look after you."

"After me, sir!"

"Yes, after you. And perhaps a little bit after your friend, Todhetley. Mr. Pell informed us the entertainments would include fortune-telling: I didn't know but there might be a roulette table as well. Or cards, or dice, or billiards."

"Oh no, sir; there's nothing of that."

"It's not the fault of the young Pells I expect, then. That choice companion, of yours, called Gusty, and the other one in scarlet."

"Neither of them is here, Mr. Brandon. Gusty is gone to the Highlands for the grouse-shooting; and Fabian sent word down he couldn't get leave. I have not seen the eldest son yet, but I suppose he is somewhere about."

"Oh," said Mr. Brandon—and whenever he spoke of the Pells his voice was thin to a degree and most decidedly took a mocking sound—"gone grouse-shooting, is Gusty. And the other can't get leave. A lieutenant, isn't he?"

"Yes, he's a lieutenant. His sister Constance has just told us she does not believe it's true he could not get leave. She thinks he never asked for it, because he wanted to stay in London."

"Ah. It's fine to be the Pells, Johnny. One son off to shoot grouse; another living his fast London life; the rest holding grand doings down here that could hardly be matched by the first nobleman among us. Very fine. Wonder what they spend a year—taking it in the aggregate?"

"Have you been here long, sir?"

"Half an hour, or so. I've been looking about me, Johnny, and listening to the champagne corks popping off. Squire here?"

"No. He and Mrs. Todhetley did not come."

"Sensible people. Where's young Joe?"

"He's with the Whitneys. Dancing with Anna, I think."

"And he'd better keep to that," said Mr. Brandon with a little nod. "He'll get no harm there."

We sat down, side by side. Taking a glance at him sideways, I saw his eyes fixed on Mrs. and the Miss Clement-Pells, who were now mixing with the company. He did not know much about ladies' dresses, but theirs seemed to strike him.

"Showy, Johnny; isn't it?"

"It looks very bright in the sun, sir."

"No doubt. So do tin-spangles."

"It's real, sir, that lace is. Helen Whitney says so."

"A great deal too real. So's the rest of it. Hark at the music and the corks and the laughter! Look at the people, and the folly!"

"Don't you like the fête, sir?"

"Johnny, I hate it with my whole heart."

I was silent. Mr. Brandon was always queerer than other people.

"Is it in *keeping* with the Pells, this grandeur and upstart profusion? Come, Johnny Ludlow, you've got some sense in your head: answer it. They have both risen from nothing, Johnny. When he began life, Pell's best ambition was to rise to a competency; an *el dorado* of three or four hundred a year; and that only when he had worked for it. I have seen her take in the milk for their tea; when they kept one servant to do everything. Pell rose by degrees and got rich; so much the more credit to his perseverance and his business talents——"

"And would you not have them spend their riches, Mr. Brandon?"

"Spend their riches!—of course I would, in a proper way. Don't you interrupt your elders, Johnny Ludlow. Where would be the use of a man's getting money unless he spent some? But not in *this* way; not in the lavish and absurd and sinful profusion that they have used of late years. Is it seemly, or right, or decent, the way they've lived in? The sons apeing the manners and company of their betters, of young fellows who are born to the peerage and to their thousands a year? The mother holding her head in the air as if she had an iron collar on? the daughters with their carriages and their harps and their German governesses, and their costly furbelows that are a scandal on common sense? The world has run mad after these Pells of late years: but I know this much—I've been ashamed only to look on at the Pells' unseemly folly."

At that moment Martha Jane Pell—in the toilette that Bill Whitney said must have cost "millions"—went looming by, flirting with Captain Connaught. Mr. Brandon looked after them with his little eyes.

"They are too fine for their station, Johnny. They were not born to this kind of thing; were not reared to it; have only plunged into it

of recent years, and it does not sit well upon them. One can but think of upstarts all the while. The Pells might have lived as gentlepeople; ay, and married their children to gentlemen and gentlewomen had they pleased: but, to launch out in this unseemly way, has been just a humiliation to themselves, and has rendered them a poor, pitiful laughing-stock in the eyes of all right-minded people. It's nothing less than a burlesque on all the proprieties of life. And it may be that we have not seen the end of it, Johnny."

"Well, sir, they can hardly be grander than——"

"Say more assumptious, lad. If there is such a word."

"I suppose I meant that, Mr. Brandon. Perhaps you think they'll be for taking the Marquis's place, Ragley, next, if it should come into the letting market. Or Eastnor Castle:—or——"

"I did not mean exactly in that way, Johnny," he stopped me again with, as he got up.

"Are you going into the eating tent, sir?"

"I am going away. Now that I have seen you and Joe Todhetley are tolerably safe from gaming tables and the like, there's nothing further for me to do here. I feel a kind of responsibility upon me in regard to you two, seeing that that gambling secret lies with me, and not with Joe's father."

"It is early to go, sir. The fun has hardly begun."

"None too early for me. I am a magistrate; looked up to, in a sort, in the county, insignificant though I am. It is not I that will countenance this upstart foolery by my presence longer than I can help, Johnny Ludlow."

Mr. Brandon disappeared: and the hours went on to dark. Once during the evening I caught sight of Mr. Clement-Pell: and what occurred then was like a bit of romance. People crowded the side paths under the light of the Chinese coloured lanterns. For lanterns were hanging on the trees and shrubs, and the whole scene was like one of enchantment taken out of the Arabian nights. One of the remote walks was not lighted; perhaps it had been forgotten. I had missed Bill Whitney, and saw slantwise through the trees a solitary figure pacing this dark walk with his arms folded. It was not very likely to be Bill: but there was no harm in going to see.

It turned out to be Mr. Clement-Pell. But before I got into the walk—for it was the nearest way back to the lights and company—somebody pushed through the trees on the other side the path and stood in front of him. The moon shone as much as an August moon ever does; the light of the sky—very light that night—flickered down through the branches: and I saw Clement-Pell give a start, as if he had been told his house was on fire.

"I thought this might be a good place to find you," cried the stranger in a low whisper that had a savage tone in it. "You have

kept out of my way two days at the bank—too busy to see me, eh?—so, hearing what was going on over here, I took the train and came.”

“I’m sure I am—happy to see you, Mr. Johnson,” cried Clement-Pell in a voice that seemed to shake a little; and unless the light was in fault, he had turned as pale as a ghost. “Would have sent you an invitation had I known you were down.”

“I daresay you would! I did not come to attend festivals, Pell, but to settle business.”

“You must be aware I cannot attend to business to-night,” interrupted Clement-Pell. “Neither do I ever enter upon it at my private residence. I will see you to-morrow at eleven at the bank.”

“Honour bright? Or is it a false plea, put forth to shuffle me off now?”

“I will see you to-morrow morning at the bank at eleven o’clock,” repeated Clement-Pell, decisively and emphatically. “We are very busy just now, and I must be there the first thing. And now, Mr. Johnson, if you will go into the refreshment tent, and make yourself at home——”

“No refreshments for me, thank you: I must hasten away to catch the train. But first of all, I will put a question to you: and answer it you must, whether it is your habit of entering on business at home, or whether it’s not. Is it true that——”

I did not want to hear more of their secrets, and went crashing through the trees with a noise. They turned round.

“Oh, is it you, Mr. Ludlow?” cried Pell, putting out his hand as I passed them.

“Yes, sir. I am looking for young Whitney. Have you seen him?”

“I think I saw him at the door of one of the tents just now. You’ll find him among the company, I daresay. Squire and Mrs. Todhetley not come, I hear.”

“No, sir.”

“Ah well—give my very kind regards to them, and say I am sorry. I hope you are taking care of yourself—in the way of refreshments.”

The stranger and I had stood facing each other during this. He was a very peculiar-looking man with an open stare; black hair, white whiskers, and very short legs. I thought it was anything but manners of him to come over, as he had confessed to, and disturb Clement-Pell at such a time.

At nine o’clock Dwarf Giles arrived with the pony carriage for the young ladies and two of us: the other and Giles were to walk; but we didn’t see the fun of leaving so early. Giles said he could not wait long: he must be back to get old Jacobson’s gig ready, who was spending the evening at the Manor. So Tod sent Giles and the carriage back again, with a message that we all preferred walking, and should follow shortly.

Follow, we did; but not shortly. It was past eleven when we got



away. The dancing had been good, and nobody at hand to say we must quit it. Helen and Anna Whitney came out with their cloaks on, and their muslin frocks pinned up. What with the dancing and the natural sultriness of the weather, the night was about as hot as an oven. We were nearly the last to leave: but did not mean to say so at home. It was a splendid night, though; very clear, the moon larger than usual. We went on in no particular order: the five of us turning out of the Parrifer gates in a heap together.

"Oh," screamed Helen, when we were some yards down the road, "where's the bag? Anna, have you brought the bag?"

"No," replied Anna. "You told me you would bring it."

"Well—I meant to. William, you must run back for it."

"Oh bother the bag," said Bill. "You girls can't want the bag to-night. I'll come over for it in the morning."

"Not want it! Why, our combs and brushes and thin shoes are in it," retorted Helen. "It is on a chair in the little room off the hall. Come, you go, William."

"I'll go, Helen," I said. "Walk quietly on, and I shall catch you up."

The grounds looked quite deserted then: the Chinese lanterns had burned themselves out, and the doors appeared to be shut. One of the side windows was open and gay with light; I thought it would be less trouble to enter that way, and leaped up the balcony steps to the empty room. Empty, as I took it to be.

Well, it was a kind of shock. The table had a desk and a heap of papers on it, and on the top of all lay a man's head. The face was hidden in his hands, but he lifted it as I went in.

It was Clement-Pell. But I declare that at the first moment I did not know him. If ever you saw a face more haggard than other faces, it was his. He sat bolt upright in his chair then, and stared at me like one in awful fear.

"I beg your pardon, sir. I did not know any one was here."

"Oh it is you," he said, and broke out into a smile—which somehow made the face look more worn and weary than before. "I thought you had all left."

"So we have, sir. But Miss Whitney forgot her bag, and I have run back for it."

"Oh ay, all right," he said. "You can go on and get it, and run out this way again if you like. It's nearest."

"Good night, sir," I said, coming through with the bag. "We have had a most delightful day, Mr. Clement-Pell, and I'm sure we ought to thank you for it."

"I am glad it has been pleasant. Good night."

The trees were pretty thick on this side the house. In passing a grove of them a few paces from the window, I saw something that was

neither trunks nor leaves; but Mr. Johnson's face garnished with its black hair and white whiskers. He was hiding amid the trees, just his face peeping out to look at the room and at Clement-Pell.

It made me feel queer. It made me think of treachery. Though how, or what, or where, I hardly knew. Not a trace was to be seen of the face now: he drew it in; no doubt to let me pass. Ought I to warn Mr. Pell that he was being watched? I had distinctly heard the man say he was going away directly: why had he stayed? Yes, it would be right and kind. Walking a bit further, I then turned back.

Clement-Pell had a pen in his hand this time, and was poring over what seemed to be a big account book, or ledger. He looked surprised again, but spoke quietly.

"Still left something behind you, Mr. Ludlow?"

"No, sir, not this time," I said, putting myself against the shelter of the wall beyond the window, so as not to be seen without, and speaking below my breath. "I thought I would come back and tell you, Mr. Pell, that there's somebody outside watching this room. If——"

I broke off in sheer astonishment. He started up from his chair and came creeping to the wall where I stood, his haggard cheeks whiter than snow. But he put a good face on it to me.

"I could not hear you," he whispered, as if that had been the reason; though it looked to me as if he were only hiding himself. "Who did you say was watching?"

"It is the same man I saw you talking to in the dark walk to-night, with the black hair and white whiskers. Perhaps he means no harm, sir: he is hiding in the trees, just his eyes peeping out to look in here."

"You are sure it is that same man?" he asked with an air of relief.

"Quite sure."

"Then it is all right. Mr. Johnson is an eccentric friend of mine. Rather—in fact, rather given to take at times more than is good for him. I suppose he has been going in at the champagne."

It might be "all right," as Mr. Pell said: I thought, by the relief in his tone, that it *was*: but I felt quite sure that he had cause to fear, if not Mr. Johnson, somebody else. At that moment there arose a slight rustle of leaves outside, and he stood, holding his breath to listen, his finger up. The damp smell of the shrubs was borne freely in on the night air.

"It is only the wind: there must be a little breeze getting up," said Mr. Clement-Pell. "Thank you; and good night. Oh, by the way, don't talk of this, Mr. Ludlow. If Johnson *has* been exceeding, he would not like to hear of it again."

"No fear, sir. Once more, good night."

Before I had well leaped the steps of the balcony, the window, a very heavy one, was put down with a bang, and then the shutters were

closed. Taking a glance back, I saw the white face of Clement-Pell through the final opening, and heard the bolts shot. What could he be afraid of? Perhaps Johnson was a madman when he took drink. Some men are.

"Have you been making that bag, Johnny?" they called out, when I caught them up.

"No."

"I'm sure it was on the chair," said Helen.

"Oh I found it at once. I stayed talking with Mr. Pell. I say, has the night grown damp?—or is it my fancy?"

"What does it matter?" returned Bill Whitney. "I wish I was in a damp bath, for my part, if it was only one of cold water."

The Squire stood at the end of the garden when we got home, with old Jacobson, whose gig was waiting. After reproaching us with our sins, first for sending the carriage home empty, then for being so late, the Squire came round and asked all about the party. Old Jacobson drew in his lips as he listened.

"It's fine to be the Clement-Pells!" cried he. "Why, a Duke-Royal could not give a grander party than that. Real lace for gowns, had they! No wonder Madame Pell turns her nose up at us farmers?"

"Did Clement-Pell send me any particular message?" asked the Pater.

"His kind regards. And he was sorry you and Mrs. Todhetley did not go."

"It was a charming party," cried Helen Whitney. "Papa and mamma put it to us, when the invitation came—would we go or would we not go. I'm glad we did. I'd not have missed it for the world. But there's something about the Clement-Pells that tells you they are not gentlepeople."

"Oh, that's the show and finery," said Bill.

"No, I think it lies more in their tones and manner of speaking," said Helen.

"Johnny, are you *quite* sure Clement-Pell sent me no message, except kind regards, and that?"

"Quite sure, sir."

"Well, it's very odd."

"What is odd, sir?"

"Never you mind, Johnny."

This was after breakfast on the Saturday morning. The Squire was opening a letter that the post had brought, and looked off it to ask me. Not that the letter had anything to do with Clement-Pell, for it only enclosed the bill for some ironmongery bought at Evesham.

On the Friday the Whitneys had gone home, and Tod with them. So I was alone: with nothing to do but wish him back again.

"I am going in to Alcester, Johnny," said the Pater, in the course of the morning. "You can come with me if you like."

"Then will you please bring me back some money," cried Mrs. Todhetley. "You will pass the bank, I suppose."

"It's where I am going," returned the Pater, and I thought his voice had rather a grumbling tone in it.

We took the pony carriage; and he let me drive. It was as hot as ever; and the Squire wondered when autumn coolness would be coming in. Old Brandon happened to be at his door as we went by, and the Pater told me to pull up.

"Going in to Alcester?" cried Mr. Brandon.

"Just as far as the bank," said the Pater. "So I hear you went to the Clement-Pells after all, Brandon."

"Just looked in to see what it was like," said old Brandon, giving me a minute's hard stare, as much as to recall to my mind what had really taken him there.

"It was something dashing, I hear."

"Rather too much so for me," cried Mr. Brandon drily. "Where's your son, sir?"

"Oh, he's gone home with the Whitneys' young folks. How hot it is to-day!"

"Ay. Too hot to stand long in it. Drive on, Johnny."

The Squire went in to the bank alone, leaving me with the carriage. He banked with the Old Bank at Worcester; but it was a convenience to have some little money nearer in case of need, and he had recently opened a small account at Alcester. Upon which Clement-Pell had said he might as well have opened it with him, at his Church Dykely branch. But the Squire explained that he had as good as promised the Alcester people, years ago, that if he did open an account nearer than Worcester it should be with them. He came out, looking rather glum, stuffing some notes into his pocket-book.

"Turn the pony round, Johnny," said he. "We'll go back. It's too hot to stay out to-day."

"Yes, sir. Is anything the matter?"

"Anything the matter! No. Why do you ask that?"

"I thought you looked put out, sir."

"There's nothing the matter. Only I think men of business should not be troubled with short memories. Take care of that waggon. What's the fellow galloping his horses at that rate for? Now, Johnny, I say, you take care. Or else, give me the reins."

I nearly laughed. At home they never seemed to think I could do anything. If they did let me drive, it was always Now take care of this, Johnny; or Take care of that. And yet, I was a more careful driver than Tod: though I might not have had so much strength as he to pull up a four-in-hand team had it run away.

"Go round through Church Dykely, Johnny, and stop at Pell's bank."

I turned the pony's head accordingly. It took us about a mile out of our way. The pavement was so narrow and the bank room so small, that I heard all that passed when the Squire went in.

"Is Mr. Clement-Pell here?"

"Oh dear no, sir," replied the manager. "He is always at the bank-in-chief on a Saturday. Did you want him?"

"Not particularly. Tell him I think he must have forgotten to send to me."

"I'll tell him, sir. He may look in here to-night on his return. If you wish to see him yourself, he will be here all day on Monday."

The Squire came out and got in again. Cutting round the sharp corner by Perkins the butcher's, I nearly cut into Mrs. and the Miss Clement-Pells, who were crossing the dusty road in a line like geese, the one before the other; their muslins trailing like a broom, and their complexions sheltered under point lace parasols.

"There you go again, Johnny! Pull up, sir."

I pulled up: and the heads came out from under the parasols, and gathered into a group to speak to us. They had quite recovered Thursday's fatigue, Mrs. Clement-Pell graciously said, in answer to the Squire's inquiries; and she hoped all her young friends had done the same, Mr. Todhetley's in particular.

"They felt no fatigue, they didn't," cried the Pater. "Why, ma'am, they'd keep anything of that sort up for a week and a day, and not feel any. How's Mr. Clement-Pell?"

"He is as well as he allows himself to be," she answered. "I tell him he is wearing himself out with work. His business is of vast magnitude, Mr. Todhetley. Good day."

"So it is," acquiesced the Pater as we drove on, partly to himself, partly to me. "Of vast magnitude. For my part, I'd rather do less, although it did involve less returns. One can forgive a man, like him, forgetting trifles. And, Johnny, I shouldn't wonder but that his enormous riches render him careless of small obligations."

Part of which was to me unintelligible.

Sunday passed. We nodded to the Miss Clement-Pells at church (their bonnets making the pew look like a garden of flowers); but did not see him or Madam. Monday passed; bringing a note from Tod, to say Lady Whitney and Bill would not let him leave yet. Tuesday morning came in. I happened to be seated under the hedge in the kitchen garden, mending a fishing-rod, when a horse dashed up to the back gate. Looking through, I saw it was the butcher's boy, Sam Rimmer. A shiny-headed young man, who preferred to ride without a hat and without a saddle, and generally had a big basket held before him. Molly, who was in one of her stinging tempers that morning, came out.

"We don't want nothing," said she tartly. "So you might have spared yourself the pains of coming."

"Don't want nothing!" returned Perkins's boy. "Why's that?"

"Why's that!" she retorted. "It's like your impudence to ask. Do families want joints every day; specially such weather as this? I'm a going to cook fowls for 'em in the parlour, and we've got the cold round o' beef for the kitchen. Now you know why, Sam Rimmer. Meat won't hardly keep from one day to another, just now: no profit to get much on't into the house."

Sam Rimmer sat looking at her as if in a quandary, gently rubbing his hair, that shone again in the sun. Whether he applied melted suet to it, or whether the grease off his hands got on to it of itself, one thing was certain; that I never saw red hair shine as his did.

"Well it's a pity but you wanted some," said he, slowly. "We've gone and been and pervided a shop full o' meat to-day, and it'll be a dead loss on the master. The Clement-Pells don't want none, you see: and they took a'most as much as all the rest o' the gentlefolks put together. There's summat up there."

"Summat up where?" snapped cross-grained Molly.

"At the Clement-Pells'. The talk is that they've busted up, and be all gone off in conseckence."

"Why, what d'ye mean?" cried Molly. "Gone off where? Busted up from what?"

But, before he could answer, the Pater, walking about the path in his straw hat and summer coat, came on the scene. He had caught the words.

"What's that you are saying about the Clement-Pells, Sam Rimmer?"

Sam Rimmer touched his shiny hair, and explained. Upon going to Parriker Hall for orders, he had found it all at sixes and sevens; some of the servants gone, the rest going. They told him their master had bursted-up, and was gone away since Sunday morning; and the family since Monday morning. And his master, Perkins, would have all the meat left on his hands, that he had killed on purpose for the Clement-Pells.

You should have seen the Squire's amazed face. At first he did not know how to take the words, and stared at Sam Rimmer without speaking.

"All the banks has went and busted up too," said Sam. "They be a saying, sir, as how there won't be nothing for nobody."

The Squire understood now. He turned tail and rushed into the house. And rushed against Mr. Brandon, who was coming in.

"Well, have you heard the news?" asked he in his thinnest voice.

"I can't believe it; I don't believe it," raved the Squire. "Clement-



Pell would never be such a swindler. He owes me two hundred pounds."

Mr. Brandon opened his little eyes. "Owes it *you*!"

"That day last week when he came driving in, in his smart carriage—when you were here, you know, Brandon. He got a cheque for two hundred pounds from me. A parcel of money that ought to have come over from the chief bank had not arrived, he said, and the Church Dykely branch might be run close: would I let him have a cheque for two or three hundred pounds on Alcester. I told him I did not believe I had anything like two hundred pounds lying at Alcester: but I drew a cheque out for that amount, and wrote a note telling the people there to cash it, and I would make it right."

"And Pell drove straight off to Alcester then and there, and got the cash for it?" said Mr. Brandon in his cynical way.

"He did. He had told me I should receive the money on the following day. It did not come, or on the Friday either; and on Saturday I went to Alcester, thinking he might have paid it in there."

"Which of course he had not," returned old Brandon. "Well, you must have been foolish, to be so taken-in."

"Taken-in!" roared the Squire, in a passion. "Why, if he had asked me for two thousand he might have had it—a man of the riches of Clement-Pell."

"Well, he'd not have got it from me. One who launched out as he did, and let his family launch out, I should never put much trust in. Any way, the riches are nowhere; and it is said Pell is nowhere too."

It was all true. As Sam Rimmer put it, Clement-Pell and his banks had bursted-up.

JOHNNY LUDLOW.



## MYRTLE, THE GIPSY GIRL.

By MM. ERCKMANN-CHATRIAN.

AT the extreme end of the village of Dosenheim, in Alsace, a few steps above the sandy footpath which leads to the wood, stands a pretty little house surrounded by fruit trees, its flat roof laden with heavy stones, its gabled front projecting over the valley. Flights of pigeons are whirling about, hens scratching under the hedges; upon the little garden wall is perched a cock whose crow is repeated by the echoes of the Falberg; two branches of a vine cover the front of the house and spread themselves out under the roof; a staircase with wooden railing, on which clothes are hanging out to dry, leads up to the first story. Mount this staircase, and at the end of a short passage you come to the kitchen, with its plates and dishes and fat soup-tureens; open the door on your right, and you enter the large sitting-room, with its old oak furniture, its ceiling supported by heavy brown beams, its old-fashioned Nuremberg clock ticking the time.

A woman about thirty-five years old, wearing a closely-fitting bodice of black silk and a black velvet cap with wide hanging ribbons, is sitting there spinning.

A man in plush coat and brown cloth breeches, with wide forehead and calm thoughtful expression, is whistling to a fat chubby-faced boy and jumping him on his knee.

Such was the house of Br mer, and such were Br mer, his wife Catherine, and their little boy Fritz in the year of grace 1820. I picture them to myself just as I have described them to you.

Christian Br mer had formerly served in the *chasseurs* of the Imperial Guard. After the year 1815, he had married Catherine, his old love, when she was no longer young, but still blooming and full of charm. With his own property, his house, four or five acres of vineyard, and the land which he got with Catherine, Br mer was one of the most well-to-do men in Dosenheim; he might have been mayor or deputy mayor, or municipal councillor if he had liked, but he did not care for these honours, and when he had done his day's work in the fields, his only pleasure was to take down his gun, whistle to his dog Friedland, and go for a turn in the wood.

Now one day, when he came back from shooting, he brought with him in his great game-pouch a little gipsy girl, lively as a squirrel and brown as a berry. He had found her at the foot of a tree, beside a poor gipsy woman, dead from fatigue, and perhaps from hunger.

Catherine cried out and protested against having the child; but Br mer, who was quite the master in his own house, simply announced to his wife that the little one was to be baptized and given the name of Susan Frederica Myrtle, and was to be brought up with little Fritz.

Of course all the gossips in the village came by turns to look at the little gipsy, whose grave and thoughtful face quite astonished them. "She is not like other children," said they. "She is a little heathen!—a regular little heathen!—You can see by her black eyes that she understands everything!—She is listening to us now—You had better take care, Master Christian, gipsies have hooked fingers—If you rear young weasels, you may find one fine morning that your cock is throttled and your eggs all gone."

"Get along with you!" exclaimed Br mer, "and mind your own business. I have known Russians, Spaniards, Italians, Germans, Jews, some had brown skins, some black, some red; some had hooked noses; some snub noses: and everywhere, yes, amongst all of them, I have found honest, worthy men."

"That might be," said the gossips, "but then all those people lived in houses, whereas gipsies live in the open air."

Br mer would hear no more, so he took the women by their shoulders and pushed them gently enough towards the door, saying as he did so, "Go along, go along; I don't want any of your advice. It is time to attend to the farm, to clean out the stables and wash the floor."

The gossips were not, however, entirely in the wrong, as unhappily was proved twelve years afterwards.

Fritz delighted to feed the cattle, and to take the horses to water, to go with his father to the fields to dig, or sow, or reap, or tie up the sheaves and then bring them in triumph to the village. To Myrtle, on the contrary, it was no pleasure to occupy herself usefully; she had no mind to milk the cows, or churn the butter, or shell the peas, or peel the potatoes. When she heard the girls of Dosenheim, as they were washing clothes of a morning in the stream that ran through the village, call her the "little heathen," she would look at herself complacently in the water, and seeing the reflection of her beautiful black hair, purple lips, and white teeth, she would smile and murmur to herself, "They call me the little heathen because I am prettier than the other girls," and bursting into laughter, she would splash about in the water with the tip of her little foot.

Catherine noticed all these things, and complained bitterly.

"Myrtle," she would say, "is of no use for anything—she will do nothing. It is of no good for me to preach to her, or advise or reprove her; she does everything cross-ways. The other day, when we were arranging the apples in the fruit-loft, she took it into her head to bite all the finest to see if they were ripe! She likes to gobble up everything she can lay her hand on."

Br mer himself could not but perceive that the child had a touch of the heathen in her, and when he heard his wife calling out from morning till night, "Myrtle! Myrtle! where are you? Oh, the wretched child! Off she has run again to gather blackberries!" he would laugh

and say to himself, "Poor Catherine, you are like a hen that has hatched duck's eggs; the little ones are in the water, she flies round and calls to them, but they pay no heed."

Every year, after the harvest was over, Fritz and Myrtle used to spend whole days far away from the farm, looking after the cattle. They sang, they whistled, they made a fire of dry stalks of hemp, and baked potatoes in the ashes, and when evening came, ran home down the stony hill, blowing trumpets made of bark.

These were Myrtle's happiest days. Seated by the fire, her beautiful brown head resting on her little hand, she would remain motionless for hours, as if lost in profound reveries. Flights of geese and wild ducks crossing the deserted skies seemed to sadden her profoundly. She followed them with a long, long gaze into the limitless depths of the skies; then suddenly she would stand up, stretch out her arms and exclaim, "I must run off—I must—oh! I must run away."

Then she would bury her face in her lap and weep: Fritz, standing close beside her, wept too, and said: "Why do you cry, Myrtle? Who has been unkind to you? One of the village boys? Kaspar or William or Henry? Tell me. I will punish him. Only tell me!"

"No!"

"What makes you cry?"

"I don't know."

"Do you want to run up the Falberg?"

"No; that isn't far enough away."

"Where do you want to go, Myrtle?"

"Over there! Over there!" and she pointed far off beyond the mountains; "where the birds go!"

Fritz opened his eyes and mouth wide with astonishment.

One day they were together at the edge of the wood; the heat was so great, the air so still, that the smoke of their little fire, instead of rising in a grey column, spread itself out like water under the dried-up briars. It was nearly midday. The grasshopper had stopped its monotonous song; there was not the hum of an insect, not the whisper of a leaf, not the chirp of a bird. The oxen and cows, their eyelids closed, were lying in the shade of a large oak-tree in the middle of the meadow, and from time to time one of them lowed in a melancholy heavy way, as if complaining.

Fritz had at first occupied himself plaiting the cord of his whip, but he, too, soon stretched himself out on the grass and put his hat over his eyes, and Friedland laid down beside him, yawning to the very ears.

It was only Myrtle who did not seem to feel the overpowering heat. Squatted close to the fire, her arms round her knees, in the full blaze of the sun, there she remained motionless, gazing with her large black eyes into the sombre colonnades of the forest.

Time passed slowly. The distant village clock struck twelve, one, two; still the Gipsy Girl did not move. Those woods, those bare mountain tops, those rocks and fir trees, seemed for her invested with something profound and mysterious.

"Yes," said she to herself, "I have seen that—it is a long time ago—a long time ago!"

All of a sudden, noticing that Fritz was sleeping soundly, she got up quietly and took to flight. Her feet seemed scarcely to touch the grass; on she ran, up the hill. Friedland turned his head listlessly, and appeared for a minute to be about to follow her, then stretched himself out afresh as if overwhelmed with weariness.

Myrtle now disappeared in the midst of the brambles which skirt the forest. With one jump she cleared the muddy ditch, in which a solitary frog croaked among the rushes.

In about twenty minutes she reached the crest of the Hollow Rock which overlooks the country of Alsace and the blue mountain tops of the Vosges.

Then she turned round to look if any one was following her: there was Fritz, his hat over his eyes, still sleeping in the middle of the green meadow. Friedland too, and the cattle under their tree.

Farther off still she saw the village, the river, the roof of the farm, round which the pigeons were flying, distance making them look as small as swallows: she saw the winding street, and the red petticoats of some peasant women walking in it; she saw the little moss-grown church in which the good *Curé Niklausse* had baptized and afterwards confirmed her in the Christian faith. Then turning towards the mountains, she gazed at the numberless spires of the firs, crowded closely together on the slopes of the narrow valleys, like the blades of grass in the fields.

As she contemplated this grand view, the young gipsy felt her chest dilate, her heart beat with an unknown force, and, resuming her course, she darted into a crevice carpeted with moss and ferns, in order to reach the herdsman's path across the woods.

Her whole soul, her savage nature, flashed out in her expression in a strange way; she seemed transfigured: with her little hands she clung to the ivy, and with her feet to the fissures of the rocks.

She soon set off again down the other slope of the mountain, running, bounding along, sometimes stopping suddenly and looking at some object—a tree, a ravine, an isolated pool, a patch of sweet-smelling grasses—as if half stupefied.

Although she did not remember having ever seen these thickets, these coppices, these heaths, at each turn of the path she said to herself: "I knew it!—the tree was here—the rock there—the torrent below!"

Although a thousand strange remembrances, like dreams, came into her mind, she did not understand them, could not explain them to her-

self. She had not yet said to herself: "What Fritz and the rest like I don't care for; the village, the meadow, the farm, fruit trees in the orchard, cows to give milk, hens to lay eggs, provisions in the barn and the cellar, and a warm room in winter; these things make *them* happy, but as for me, I don't want all this; for I am a little savage, a regular savage! I was born in the woods, like the squirrel on the oak, the hawk on the rock, the thrush on the fir tree." No, she had never reasoned thus, instinct alone guided her; driven by this strange impulse, at sunset she reached the *plateau* of the Kohle-Platz, which is the place where the gipsies who are going from Alsace to Lorraine usually stop to pass the night, and hang up their pot in the middle of the heath.

Tired out, her feet all bruised, her little red petticoat torn by the brambles, Myrtle sat down at the foot of an oak.

For a long time she remained motionless, staring into space, listening to the roar of the wind amongst the tall fir trees, happy to feel herself alone in this solitude.

Night was coming on. Myriads of stars sparkled in the sombre depths of the sky; the moon rose, and the few birch trees scattered on the sides of the hill caught its silver rays.

Sleep began to overtake the young gipsy; her head was drooping, when suddenly she was awakened by shouts far off in the woods.

Listening attentively, she recognized the voices: Brêmer, Fritz, and all the farm people were in pursuit of her.

Without a moment's hesitation, Myrtle darted deeper into the forest, and only stopped running from time to time that she might listen again. At last the shouts grew fainter.

Soon she heard nothing but the rapid beating of her heart, and she slackened her pace.

At last, very late, when the moon had set, and she was quite worn out with fatigue she sank down amongst the heather and fell into a deep sleep; she was now twelve miles from Dosenheim, near the source of the Zinsel; she felt sure that Brêmer would not extend his search as far as that.

## II.

It was broad daylight when Myrtle awoke to find herself alone on the Harberg, under an old fir tree covered with moss. A thrush was singing over her head, another was answering it from a long distance, far off in the valley.

The morning breeze was stirring the leaves, but the air, already warm, was laden with a thousand perfumes of ivy, mosses, and wild honey suckle. The young gipsy opened her eyes quite amazed; she looked about her, and then remembering that she should not hear Catherine calling out, "Myrtle! Myrtle! Where are you, wretched child?" she smiled, and listened to the song of the thrush.

She heard the murmuring of a spring close to her, and found she had



only to turn her head to see the fresh water rushing along the rock and spreading itself out on the grass. An arbutus tree, laden with red berries, hung over the rock ; beneath it grew a splendid aconite, with violet flowers spotted with white.

Myrtle was thirsty, but she felt so lazy, and so contented to lie there listening to the sound of the water and the singing of the thrush, that she was disinclined to disturb the harmony, and she let her pretty brown head fall back again, and smiling looked up at the sky through her half-open eyelids :

"This is how I shall always be," she said to herself. "I am lazy : I know I am. God made me so !"

As she went on dreaming in this way, she pictured to herself the farm, with its cocks and hens, and then thinking of the eggs in the barn, hidden under a few blades of straw, she said to herself, "I wish I had got two eggs now, two hard-boiled ones, like Fritz had in his sack yesterday, and a crust of bread, and salt. But, pshaw ! if one hasn't got eggs, blackberries and whortleberries are very good too."

"Ah ! I see some there," she exclaimed, "I see some."

She was right, there were lots of them on the heath.

In a few minutes she noticed that the thrush had stopped singing, and raising herself on her elbow she saw the bird pecking one of the berries on the arbutus tree. She got up to drink some water out of the hollow of her hand, and noticed plenty of cress growing all about.

Then certain words she had heard from the curé Nicklausse came into her mind : such a thing had never happened to her before. The words were these :—

"Consider the fowls of the air : they neither sow nor reap : which neither have storehouse nor barn, and God feedeth them !

"Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow ; they toil not, they spin not ; and yet I say unto you that Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these.

"If then God so feed the birds, and so clothe the grass of the field, shall he not much more feed and clothe you !

"O men of little faith ! Take no thought for these things : for all these things do the heathen and the nations of the world seek after : and your Father knoweth that ye have need of them."\*

"Ah," thought Myrtle, "when Mother Catherine used to call me a little heathen, I might well have made answer to her, it is you who are heathens, for you sow and reap, and we are good Christians who live as the birds of the air."

She had scarcely ended these wise reflections, when a noise of footsteps among the dry leaves made her lift up her head.

She was about to take to flight when a gipsy lad of eighteen or twenty years old, tall, slight, with brown skin, curly hair, sparkling eyes,

\* These verses are translated from the French version of the Bible.

and thick, broad lips, let himself slide down the rock, and looking at her admiringly exclaimed,

"Almâni?"

"Almâni!" replied Myrtle, with emotion.

"To what troop do you belong? Eh? Eh?" asked the young fellow.

"I don't know: I am searching."

Then she told him how Brêmer had brought her up, and how she had escaped from his house the day before. Meanwhile, the young gipsy stood there smiling, and showing his white teeth.

"As for me," said he, throwing out his arm, "I am going to Hazlach, to-morrow is the day of the great fair, and all our troop will be there. Pfifer-Karl, Melchior, Fritz, the clarionet player, and Concon-Peter. The women will tell fortunes, and we shall play music. If you like, come with me!"

"I should like very much," said Myrtle, casting down her eyes.

He then kissed her, put his sack upon her back, and taking his stick in both his hands, exclaimed, "Woman, you shall be mine. You shall carry my sack, and I will feed you. Now forward!"

And Myrtle, who had been so lazy at the farm, now stepped forward cheerfully. He followed her, singing and bounding along on his hands and feet, as joyous as could be.

Since that day nothing has been heard of Myrtle.

Fritz thought he should die if she did not come back, but in a few years he consoled himself for her loss by marrying Grédel Dick, the daughter of the miller.

Catherine appeared quite contented, for Grédel Dick was the richest heiress in the village.

Brêmer only was still sad; he had ended by loving Myrtle as if she were his own child.

One winter's day he was looking out of the window, and on seeing a gipsy woman in rags, with a sack on her back, crossing the valley, which was all blocked up with snow, he sat down, drawing a deep sigh.

"What is the matter, Brêmer?" asked his wife.

As he did not answer, she went up to him, and saw that he was dead.



## ON VARIOUS PRECIOUS STONES.

SHAKSPEARE, in his celebrated lines on Anne Hathaway, enumerates the "orient list,"—

"The diamond, topaz, amethyste,  
The emerald mild, the ruby gaye,"

and to these must be added the sapphire. With the exception of the diamond, these gems are known by the name of corundum-stones, and are also, with that exception, the hardest amongst the mineral products of nature.

As the diamond is pure crystallized carbon, so the corundum stones are pure crystallized clay. The green, violet, and yellow corundum stones are distinguished as the oriental emerald, amethyst, and topaz, the true emerald, amethyst, and topaz being distinct minerals. Adamantine spar is a common kind of corundum; and emery, so extensively used in polishing glass and other fine surfaces, is of the same nature.

The coloured gems known to the ancients were mostly corundum stones; Mount Zalora, in Upper Egypt, being the only place where the true emerald was obtainable for many centuries.

The Greeks called the ruby *anthrax*—a live coal; and amongst the Romans, not only the ruby, but the red garnet, and all other stones of the same hue, were classed together as carbuncles. One of the qualities ascribed to the carbuncle by Pliny, is that of not being affected by fire; this is true only of the ruby.

Berzelius states that the rich colour of the ruby is owing to the presence of peroxide of iron, and the cerulean tint of the sapphire to the protoxide; but the analysis of gems appears to be scarcely yet complete.

Rubies and sapphires are occasionally found, when cut and polished, to show a six-pointed star, formed by rays from the centre, with a beautiful play of light. These are called star rubies and star sapphires, and are much prized.

All the corundum stones are found in greatest abundance in Asia, hence the epithet *orient* gems. The finest rubies are still procured from India, though others of an inferior kind are found in Bohemia. These corundum gems are imbedded in the quartz rock. Masses of this quartz fall from precipices, and are shattered into fragments. These are carried away by the mountain torrents, and are further broken up or worn down. The precious metals and gems become thus disengaged, and sink to the bottom, or adhere to the banks of the stream, where they are found when the summer heat causes the water to subside.

Occasionally a river is diverted from its course, and the old channel is filled up by sand and gravel. These ancient beds, when laid open, form mines of precious ores and jewels.

Many rubies, rudely cut and imperfectly polished, are seen in antique jewelry. Though they occur set as rings, they are seldom engraved, owing to the excessively hard nature of the stone. Rubies were so much prized by the Indian potentates that they endeavoured as much as possible to monopolize the possession. One of the titles of the King of Burmah was Lord of the Rubies. The finest known specimens belonged to the Subbah of Deccan and the King of Pegu. Tavernier says he counted on the throne of an Indian monarch a hundred and eight large rubies, one of which weighed two ounces and a half. Large rubies are exceedingly rare in Europe: the largest belonged to the Emperor Rudolphe the Second; it was nearly the size of a hen's egg. There were two in possession of the Marquis de Drée; one only two carats or eight grains in weight, sold for forty pounds, and another of ten grains, for fifty-six pounds.

The ruby or carbuncle figures extensively both in oriental romance and mediæval superstition. It was supposed to give light in the dark, and in the time of the learned Camillus Leonardus—physician to Cæsar Borgia—was endowed in the popular belief with many wonderful virtues. It was an antidote to poison; and if the wearer were threatened with misfortune the stone lost its crimson glow, and turned dark; when the evil was passed or averted, it resumed its pristine colour. Wolfgang Gabelschover relates the following anecdote:—

"On the fifth day of December, 1600, A.D., as I was going with my beloved wife Catherine Adelmannie (of pious memory), from Stutgard to Caluna, I observed by the way that a very fine ruby which I wore mounted in a gold ring (the which she had given me) lost repeatedly, and each time almost completely, its splendid colour, and that it assumed a sombre blackish hue, which blackness lasted not one day but several; so much so, that being greatly astonished I drew the ring from my finger and put it into a casket. I also warned my wife that some evil followed her or me, the which I augured from the change in the ruby. And truly I was not deceived, for within a few days she was taken mortally sick. After her death the ruby resumed its pristine colour and brilliancy."

Fenton, in his "*Secret Wonders of Nature*," says, "As the ruby represents fire when it is in his most vehement and penetrating heat, so in the other"—the sapphire—"we discern a likeness of the azured sky, being most calm and clear. With the ancients all blue stones, even the lapis lazuli, were sapphires. The stone now known as sapphire was distinguished by the name of Hyacinthus from its resemblance in colour to the flower that sprang from the blood of the favourite of Apollo; the flower that bears inscribed on its petals Apollo's cry of grief, "aiai." The sapphire consequently was dedicated to Apollo.

In the time of Camillus Leonardus the blue corundum was already generally known as sapphire. At present the most valuable of these

stones are found in Ceylon. Singularly enough, there is only one place in Europe where they have been discovered, and that is in a brook near Epailly, in France; these, however, are small in size, and of a pale colour. A sapphire of ten carats is considered worth 50*l*.; one of twenty carats, 200*l*.

Pale sapphires may be rendered entirely colourless by exposure to intense heat; they thus also acquire great brilliancy, and are sometimes passed off as diamonds. There are several intaglii engraved on these white sapphires that were at one time believed to be on the more precious gem. The sapphire, as well as the ruby, was formerly considered as an antidote to poison, and a preservative against infection. Dioscorides says that the sapphire, enclosed in a box with a spider, "kills her suddenly, such is his power over her poison." According to Solinus, "this is the gem that feels the air and sympathises with the heavens, and does not shine equally if the sky be cloudy or bright."

The true emerald, instead of being pure clay like the corundum stones, has a mixture of flint and glucine, besides small portions of iron and lime. According to some chemists, its beautiful grass-green colour is attributable to the oxide of chrome, others refer it to the carburet of hydrogen, similar to the chlorophyle, which is the colouring matter in leaves of plants.

Green gems were familiar to the ancients under the name of *Smaragdus*; this was the Greek corruption of the Sanscrit *Smarakata*; the green corundum having been originally imported into Europe by Bactrian traders.

Pliny ranks *smaragdus* next to *adamas* and pearls. Fenton gives it the first place; "because," says he, "by his lovely verdure he doth not only solace the eye more than any other stone, but also for delight and flourishing view, it so surmounts both forests, trees, and herbs, that nature seems to contend with the earth to whom the prize of greenness is due, either to the emerald or plants."

The emeralds, now almost exclusively obtained from Peru and Chili, are much superior in quality to those anciently found in Egypt. The emerald mines in Mount Zalora had become an almost forgotten tradition, when they were rediscovered by Monsieur Cailland, in the same state as when they were abandoned after the time of the Ptolemies. He found a number of excavations, subterranean galleries, and cuttings, carried to so great a depth as to admit of four hundred men being employed there at a time. Ropes, baskets, levers, grinding-stones, lamps, and various other tools and utensils were lying scattered about, as if but just left by the workmen. Instead of many centuries, it might have been only a few days since the galleries had resounded to the pick and the shovel.

On the return of Monsieur Cailland to Cairo, he presented to the viceroy a gem, procured from mines of the very existence of which

the pasha had, till then, been ignorant. The enterprising mineralogist was at once commissioned to return and open out the long-neglected mines. On further examination, Monsieur Cailland discovered more than forty excavations, and found several beautiful specimens of the gem.

The Arabs were superstitiously afraid of these mines. A deputation of the Arabs of the district cautioned Monsieur Cailland strongly against sleeping near the caves, believing them to be not only the resort of snakes and jackals, but of demons. Monsieur Cailland insisted upon encamping there, however, in spite of warning, but none of his men would lie down to rest. They passed the night in firing off guns, to drive away the evil spirits of which the neighbouring Arabs had warned them.

No other gem is so liable to flaws and defects as the emerald; even the smallest Peruvian stone scarcely escapes one flaw, if not more. This is so much the case, that a perfect specimen is looked upon with suspicion, for no gem has been more thoroughly imitated. This liability to defect renders emeralds extremely various in price, their value being from ten shillings to three pounds per carat, according to their clearness and depth of colour.

The Orientals have a great veneration for the emerald to this day; they believe that it has the power of endowing the wearer with courage, and of averting the plague. By the ancients it was supposed to be beneficial to the eyesight. Nero is said to have watched the gladiatorial combats by means of their reflection in an emerald. Theophrastus mentions the custom of wearing an emerald set in a ring; and refers it to the idea that occasionally casting the eyes upon it was refreshing to the sight; and ancient gem engravers were in the habit of keeping one of these stones by them, to turn to when their eyes were strained by the minuteness of their work.

If a large emerald be held so as to reflect the light, it will appear as if it were silvered at the back; and its plane being brought to a particular angle with the ray of light, its green disappears, and it precisely resembles a fragment of looking-glass. It is the only gem susceptible of this change.

Emeralds of enormous size are mentioned by ancient historians; such as the *sacro catino*, of the Cathedral of San Giovanni, at Genoa, and the famous table of Solomon, found by the Arabian conquerors in the Gothic treasury of Spain, but these are, of course, imitations in glass.

On the conquest of Peru, the Spaniards obtained possession of an immense emerald, something of the shape and nearly the size of an ostrich egg. This was supposed by the Peruvians to be the abode of the goddess Esmeralda. The priests persuaded the people that no offerings were so acceptable to this goddess as her own children, and,



on holy-days, quantities of emeralds were brought into the temple by her worshippers. It is said that the Spaniards found many hundred-weight of these jewels. Cortez presented one hundred-weight to the king; and when he married, amongst other valuable gifts to his bride, were emeralds cut into various forms; one of these, carved as a rose, so much excited the envy of the queen, as to cause the imprudent Cortez to lose his favour at court.

The topaz is harder than the emerald, and, in this respect, ranks next to the sapphire. It consists of about one-half clay, one-third flint, and the remainder fluoric acid. The topaz varies in tint, from pale yellow to orange. The yellow topaz, by burning, may be changed into an agreeable pinkish hue, and is in this state much admired. Some of the topaz stones found in Brazil are white; these, when polished, are almost as brilliant as white sapphire, and receive the name of *nova minas*, or *nova mina* diamonds.

A few blue topazes have been found, as beautiful in colour as the sapphire, only not so hard. The true topaz is found in Brazil, and in Bohemia, Saxony, and other parts of Germany. It was believed by the ancients to have the same property as the ruby, that of giving light in the dark; and was thought to lose its colour in the presence of poison.

The amethyst is the least hard amongst those stones properly termed jewels. It is crystallized flint; its beautiful violet colour being due to the presence of iron and manganese. The Oriental amethyst is extremely rare; previous to the French revolution, Monsieur D'Augny, a wealthy financier, was the only private person known to possess a specimen. The real amethyst resembles the Oriental gem, or violet corundum stone, only in colour. It is frequently found in masses, some large enough to allow of drinking cups being carved out of the solid piece. These cups were believed, both in ancient times and in the middle ages, to counteract the intoxicating power of the wine. The amethyst was also thought to dispel sleep, and sharpen the intellect.

The amethyst is found both in the East and in the Brazils, as well as in many parts of Europe. A fine vein is said to exist near Kerry, in Ireland. Geodes—vulgarly called potato-stones—are picked up in Oberstein, sometimes as much as two feet in diameter; these, when broken, are found to be filled with crystallized amethyst, of a rich colour. Similar Geodes abound in India.

A fine clear deep coloured amethyst of an inch diameter is worth from 10*l.* to 15*l.* This is the proper stone for a Bishop's ring. The amethyst is a favourite stone with engravers; intaglii of all ages are found carved in this gem. Even Egyptian and Etruscan scarabei in amethyst are not uncommon. The most precious set of amethysts in existence, is a necklace that belonged to Queen Charlotte; it is valued at 2000*l.* According to strict etiquette, this is the only precious stone it is allowable to wear while in mourning.

## JEAN CLIFTON'S LETTERS.

## I.

**D**ID you think I never intended to keep my promise of writing to you? Six months gone! and never a word! Six months of that precious commodity—*Time*. But I will not stop to moralize until I have confessed my sins, and received absolution.

When I left you I really meant to write immediately on arriving at my destination; but you are aware how good intentions get frustrated. After all, that is no just excuse. And now to begin at the beginning, Mary.

I had a long railway journey before me, you know; and, after that, ever so many miles by stage. Of course I thought some one would have met me at the station. But no: and I got into the coach alone, the porter piling my luggage on the top. The coach was full, and I sat in my corner with my veil over my face. Two of the people talked a curious dialect—Welch, I suppose. A pleasant-looking, gentlemanly man faced me, his face bronzed as if he had been a traveller: he spoke English as well as I do, and yet he now and then talked with the natives as they talked. When I was wearied to death, and sick for want of tea, and had been asleep twenty times, the lumbering coach stopped, and the driver opened the door.

“Crydd Plas. Somebody’s for it.”

The somebody was me. Crydd Plas is my uncle’s. I got out, and the luggage was put down by the gate. Some chimneys, as if belonging to extensive works, and a smelting furnace lay to the left; to the right, some trees that might conceal a house. The coachman pointed to the latter: *that* was Dr. Danvers’, he said.

Yes, but what of my luggage? Was it to stay there in the public road? And what a shame that nobody had come to meet me! From the front of the coach, jogging onwards now, stepped the gentleman before mentioned. I never saw that he had got out too.

“Can I be of any service to you?” he said, lifting his hat.

“Oh, thank you. I am so surprised that no one should have come to meet me. It is not far, you see—and I suppose my things will be safe.”

“Quite safe. I will take care of them.”

It was very good of him—and relieved me of the dilemma. I wondered whether he belonged to the district—which seemed from its loneliness to be the fag-end of the civilized world. Down I hastened, along the narrow grass-grown path that led to the trees and through them, and came in view of the house. A roomy, old-fashioned, red-brick dwelling, with barns and all kinds of buildings around, and a

large grass-plot in front amid a nice garden. He was very rich, that uncle of mine, and report said very eccentric.

The front door stood open. No one answered my ring, and I went on in, and opened the first room I came to, on the right of the hall. A fine old sitting-room, and an equally fine old gentleman in it, with a white hair and beard and fierce blue eyes. He started up from his chair.

"Why! Who are you?" he haughtily asked. "What do you want?"

There was no mistaking him for papa's brother: voice, handsome face, bright blue eyes—all were alike. They were but half-brothers, either: their mother was the same.

"I am Jane Clifton, Uncle Danvers. They call me Jean at home."

A minute's surprised pause, and then he burst into a laugh. They had not expected me till the later coach went by in the evening.

"You don't look glad to see me, Uncle Danvers!"

"My dear, I am very glad. But I can hardly believe it's my niece Jean. When I saw you last, you were a little bit of a thing, riding bare-backed on your pony in the fields, with your fair hair flying behind you."

"I was sixteen then, and a dreadful tomboy, uncle. I am twenty-six now."

"Ay; time flies, and we forget to remember its flitting. I had been thinking of you as that little girl, Jean, I'm afraid. And so, you've not been strong lately, and have come to the air of these fine mountains to renovate you. It will be sure to do it, my dear."

They had prepared for me the prettiest room imaginable, with white, cool muslin curtains waving before the open windows, tasty furniture, and a luxurious bed. On the dressing-table stood a beautiful workbox inlaid with silver, my name, "Jane Clifton," engraved on the silver plate in the centre of the lid. So Uncle Danvers *had* thought of me, you see.

My uncle has never married. He took to his nephew, Earnest Wilbraham, and has brought him up as his son. It is *his* sister's son, not my father's; so that we are but half-cousins. Earnest is at the Danvers mines—but my uncle himself does not do much work now. The household is a quiet one: Ann the cook, Sophia the housemaid, Evan the man. Sophia waits on me: she's a pretty girl with rosy cheeks, and more talkative than a parrot. On that very first evening of my arrival, she contrived to let me know that my Uncle Danvers had a pet scheme in his head. And what do you think it was?—That I and Earnest Wilbraham should fall in love with one another! There! You'd never have guessed it, Mary.

Well—to go on with that first evening. I put on that blue muslin you like so much, though it was somewhat cold for the spring day, and

a bunch of beautiful white blossoms in its corsage, that were in water on my table. The trunks arrived in good order: the unknown cavalier had kept ward and watch over them. But, oh Mary! what do you think? Instead of that unknown man being at least a knight in disguise (*i.e.*, ordinary clothes), he turned out to be nobody but my uncle's new book-keeper, name Bond!

The tea—and a very substantial one—was on the table when I went down. A young fellow, certainly not older than myself, stood with his back to me, his elbow leaning on the old-fashioned mantel-piece. I could see he was good-looking, only seeing so much as that: rather tall; certainly slender and graceful; his head drooping, as if in thought. A handsome, shapely head it was.

"Are you asleep, sir?" asked my uncle sharply—which caused him to turn at once. "This is Jane Clifton. And, Jean, this wondrously polite fellow is my graceless nephew, Earnest Wilbraham."

"I beg your pardon," he said, laughing and holding out his hand to me. "I did not hear any one come in."

It was a frank face: and mine, you know, Mary, is frank too. We seemed to be at home with each other directly, and took at once to call one another by our Christian names.

"Will it trouble you too much to pour out the tea, Jean?" asked my uncle. "Earnest, give your cousin something to eat. Choose what you will, my dear: ham, fowl, pie—look and see."

"The new book-keeper's come, sir," said Earnest, after loading my plate, Welch fashion.

"Oh he has, has he!"

"Seems a sharp fellow; up to his work. I fancy he'll suit."

"What age?"

"Well—turned thirty. I went to see about that lower mine this afternoon, uncle," continued Earnest, after a pause. "The pump works well now."

"Oh. You took the way by the school-house, I suppose?"

Of all queer, dry, unsociable tones, the one Mr. Danvers spoke in was about the worst. Earnest's face turned red to the roots of his hair; and there ensued a discomfiting silence. What was the secret? The "school-house" has something to do with it, reasoned I. But nothing more was said that night to throw light on it.

And now, Mary, I shall write the rest of my letters in the form of a journal, putting dates, and that. I think it will be more intelligible to you. A great deal has occurred in these six months; events of importance have taken place that are more like romance than reality.

*April 10th.*—Monday morning.—I know the secret now, Mary. It was discovered to me yesterday, and turns out to be just what I expected—Earnest is in love without leave.

My uncle was not well enough to go to church. Between ourselves, he is getting infirm—but I'd not say so before him for the world. "You'll take care of your cousin Jean thither," said he to Earnest. And accordingly we started. It was a good walk, through glens and all kinds of places; but the sun shone brightly, and I had begun to feel better and stronger already.

"What place is that?" I said to Earnest, as we passed a low, long building.

"That's the school-house," he answered—and I declare if the same bright red flush did not dye his face again! "There's the church," he continued, pointing to a little grey edifice in the distance. And I am ashamed to say that, what with our talking and lingering, the service had begun when we went in. Happening to look at Earnest after we were seated, the change in his face transfixed me with amazement.

Have you ever seen a valley, dark with shadows and gloomy with overhanging clouds, illuminated all at once with a burst of April sunshine? Just such a change had come over my cousin's handsome face. I followed the glance of his eyes. Alas for Uncle Danvers' hopes! and had *my* heart been engaged in them too, alas for poor Jean Clifton!

There she sat, the woman who I was sure reigned supreme in Earnest Wilbraham's heart. Her side-face was turned towards me, hidden a little by her dark hair, but I could see that her head was set on her shoulders like a queen's. She turned her head after awhile, and raised her eyes, and as they met Earnest's, a half smile of recognition broke over her face, followed by a shy, slow blush, and then they fell again. But oh, they were such beautiful eyes!—and she was beautiful altogether. Quite out of place, keeping guard over those charity school children. I did not, I'm afraid, hear much of the sermon: I was gazing at *her*.

I wanted to find out who she was and all about it, but there was no opportunity as we went home, for one and another kept coming up. Amidst others, Mr. Bond. "I shall ask him to come home to dinner, Jean," whispered Earnest. "He's a rare good fellow and quite a gentleman; and he knows more about mines than I do."

So Mr. Bond went home with us: and I thought I had never met any one I liked so much. It seemed to me that he also was out of place as a common book-keeper. Well-informed, gentlemanly, of good education and extensive travel—I wondered what could have reduced him to accept a post like that, and to live in Dame Morgan's cottage. There was only one thing about him my uncle did not like—his utter reticence as to his antecedents. "Suppose he should turn out to be a returned forger?" cried Earnest in a joke when Mr. Bond had gone.

It was a delicious evening. I had been playing a hymn, and Earnest stood by the piano. "Earnest, who was that girl with the beautiful brown eyes?" I suddenly asked, turning round on the music-stool.

"A great many girls have brown eyes," was Earnest's answer, his face turning as red as the piano lining.

"That's an evasion, sir. You know which I mean. She sat with the school children."

"That was Miss Rayburn," interposed Uncle Danvers from the window—and who was to suppose he had been listening while he read? "Queen Rayburn, they call her," he added in a supercilious tone. "She is the charity-schoolmistress."

And the answer altogether sounded so full of angry displeasure that I could not say another syllable. Earnest bid us good night, and went up to his room.

*April 22nd.*—Earnest has told me all about it—given me his confidence at last. He loves this Queen Rayburn with all his heart and mind—and as usual Mr. Danvers is dead against it. True love never ran smooth in this world. I shall do what I can to help them. I am not afraid of Uncle Danvers if all the world is.

Her name's Clara: a pretty name, too. I asked Mr. Bond the other day if he did not think so. He gave a stammering kind of yes, and turned as red as Earnest. What for, I wonder?

*May 29th.*—All those weeks gone on, and I've not been well again! That is, I have said I've not. I want Uncle Danvers to ask that girl here for companionship. She is getting to look ill, too, pale and worn. No wonder; only those poor little children to talk to, and she a born lady.

"Uncle Danvers," I said, "I think I shall go home."

Uncle Danvers fairly leaped out of his chair. "Go home!—when we are so nicely settled. I have not been so comfortable for twenty years. I can't have you go, Jean; indeed I can't."

"Well, uncle, I am dull here."

"Dull! with those beautiful mountains in the distance, and our birds and flowers! Dull!"

"Birds and flowers are all very good as far as they go, but I want *human* companionship. I'm lonesome and home-sick, and that's just the truth of it." I did tell the truth. The tears rose to my eyes as I thought of the happy circle gathered at that hour around the breakfast-table in my far-off home. My uncle looked at me sharply.

"Human companionship? You have mine, Jean; and sometimes Bond's; and Earnest's, when he is at home."

"But there's no lady, uncle. I wish—I wish you would ask that poor pale Miss Rayburn to spend the coming holidays here. She looks so pale, poor thing, and it would be just the thing for me. Won't you?"

"No, I won't!" he thundered, from his end of the table. "There"—he said, calming a little; "I don't like to be rude to women; I won't be rude to you, Jean, but you should not have asked me *that*."

"Never mind, uncle; it will be little difference whether I make



more acquaintances or not, I remain so short a time now. Do not let my asking an impossible thing disturb you."

"What do you know of Miss Rayburn, Jean?"

"Not very much, uncle. I've seen her and talked to her. And oh! I like her greatly."

He made no answer: only bit his lip.

"As to your being afraid of her and Earnest, uncle—for of course I have seen a little of the politics here, my eyes have not been shut—let me tell you that you need not be. Clara Rayburn would no more let Earnest talk to her seriously against your will, than she'd come in here and steal your best boots. She is a lady, uncle, and an honourable one."

"I'd rather not talk about this, Jean, if it's all the same to you." And that silenced me.

Will it succeed, this plan of mine?—the getting Queen Rayburn here for the short holidays? I can only plot for it. Her consent must be had as well as his.

*June 2nd.*—"Miss Rayburn," I said, going in at an inopportune moment yesterday, for she was sweeping out her school-room, "may I speak with you?"

"Her proud face flushed a little, but she stood, calm and cool.

"I wish to ask a favour. Will you grant it?"

She bent her stately head a little, not yet understanding.

"I want you to promise to spend the week or two's holidays at Crydd Plas. For my sake."

"I would do a good deal for your sake, Miss Clifton, for you are very kind and friendly with me; but not this."

"Not if Mr. Danvers asks you?"

She flushed, and paled. "Well, yes—if he asked me. But I think that will not be, Miss Clifton."

"And I think most likely that it will. I shall be so very lonely, all in that place by myself. Earnest Wilbraham is going out for a month, you know. Good bye."

And unless Earnest had been going out, even bold I should never have dared to ask it. I wish my uncle knew this sweet girl well!

*June 5th.*—No luck as yet. If I begin to speak of it, Mr. Danvers gets up and goes out of the room, or turns and whistles to the birds. Welch manners, I presume. If Queen Rayburn does not come here, I think I *will* go home. As to John Bond, *he* is getting grumpy now! never hardly comes near me; and when he does come is as formal as an old man. A nice lively place this is, to stay in!

I wrote word home to say I was coming, and gave my uncle the letter to read.

*June 7th.*—I have conquered. Queen Rayburn is to come.

"Come in here, Jean," said my uncle sadly, as I passed his sanctum

between breakfast and dinner. "I've done wrong, Jean ; I ought to have told you of the skeleton in our house."

"The skeleton !"

"Most houses have one, child."

"And what is yours, uncle ?"

"That girl. That Miss Rayburn."

"But *why* ?"

"Earnest has set his mind upon marrying her. I can never give my consent, and he knows it ; on the other hand he is not undutiful enough to run counter to me. So the girl is the skeleton that parts us ; things are topsy turvey with discomfort. Before you came I hoped you and he might fall in love with one another and end it."

"Thank you, uncle," I gravely said. "But what is your objection to Miss Rayburn ? Her want of position and of money ?"

"Well, it's not desirable that Earnest should choose one of neither position nor money. But it's not *that*."

"What is it then ?"

"The girl's wonderful likeness to her mother. I seem to hate her for it."

"Uncle !"

"I'll tell you the story, Jean," he said, his beautiful old face flushing up like a school-boy's—"I'll tell you the story. We were girl and boy together ; this girl's mother, Clara Davis, and I, and in after years we thought we loved each other, till that fellow Rayburn came along. He was a widower with one boy—and he had the mines over at Plas—but you won't know the place if I tell you, Jean : it's about three miles away. He must have bewitched her : her love for him grew like wheat in spring. I nearly scared her to death the night she told me—for she was too honest to keep me in doubt after she knew her own mind. I fainted dead away—fool, wasn't I?—and when I came to, she was kneeling over me, saying everything soothing and comforting you could imagine, but never a word of love. *That* brought me round. I knew it was all over—she might almost as well have sealed my death-warrant. When men of mature age love as I did, Jean, it's like a matter of life or death. We parted there and then ; and I came away with a heart that cried for vengeance."

He paused—but what could I say ? These solemn histories subdue the bravest of us.

"She married him, Jean, and he grew rich ; everything Rayburn touched seemed to turn to money. There was a little girl born—this woman that you and Earnest call Queen. Some twelve years ago we heard over here that Rayburn was dead. Alive and well one hour, he was gone the next. There was confusion, for he died without a will. And in the nick of time there came forward Rayburn's brother, bringing forward a young man who had been privately looked upon as an

illegitimate son of Rayburn's before he had ever married at all. Rayburn's brother testified that he was legitimate, not illegitimate; that there had been in fact an early private marriage; and that in consequence the later son, Jack, who had been reared as the son and successor, was not legitimate. Well, Jean—not to dwell on this—it was all proved. Paul Rayburn took possession of the mines and everything else; and Jack, poor fellow, went off to sea under his bitter blow, and was drowned. Mrs. Rayburn retired to a pretty cottage place, Paul allowing her a handsome income. Two years ago she died; and Miss Rayburn, this girl, your Queen, at once flung Paul's offers of continuation of income back to him, saying she would get her own living rather than accept a penny."

"I honour her for it," I interrupted.

"She has hated him always. She says he behaved cruelly in turning out Jack—the great big brother whom she loved. Just then the school-mistress here left, and she got the place. There's the history, Jean."

"And never a word is there in it, uncle, that need cause you to set your face against the marriage. Clara Rayburn would make a wife in a thousand."

"I cannot allow Earnest to make her his."

"Earnest is just the sort of fellow to be a good man if he gets a good wife to influence him. I'd not answer for him otherwise."

"You plead his cause warmly, Jean."

"I only say what I think. But all this talk about marriage is premature, Uncle Danvers: there's no question of it yet. Earnest is going away, you know, the day after to-morrow, and the house for a month will be as lonely as one of your mines. I want you to let me have Clara Rayburn here for a little while of it! Poor thing! no society! Just plodding on and doing her duty for a bare living."

"Well, Jean, you may have her."

I did not believe my ears. "Oh, uncle!—dear uncle!"

"But don't expect me to give you much of my company," and left the room with a bang.

*June 11th.*—Earnest and I had our own little confidential chat before he went.

"Take good care of her, Jean. You've been as good as a sister to me already."

Poor fellow! there were tears in his eyes when he left.

*June 25th.*—Miss Rayburn has been here a week. I have dropped the "Miss," and call her Queen. The first time she blushed vividly.

"It was Earnest named you that, was it not?" I said.

"Yes."

And that's the only time his name has been mentioned between us. To talk of him would seem like treason to my Uncle Danvers. As to

my uncle, though he does not, as he threatened, give us much of his company, he is quite pleasant and civil when he does; and I think begins to like Queen himself. Mr. Bond and she are great friends: she says he puts her in mind of some one she must have known in by-gone years, for his voice seems like an air in music we try to recall, and cannot.

"But, Clara," I said to her to-day, when she was remarking how soon it was that she must resume her duties, "you surely cannot go on teaching poor children for ever!"

"I'd rather do it, Jean, than have aid from Paul Rayburn," she sighed. "Perhaps God will help me some time."

Dear, patient heart! The cross has been heavy for those young shoulders.

*July 1st.*—I hardly know what has happened. That is, I hardly know how to begin to tell of it.

The evening before Queen was departing for the blessed school-house, she and I went out for our last walk together. The air was soft, and through the low rustle of the leaves we could hear the distant splash of the water at the Falls; and without knowing why, we turned our steps thither, saying little.

"I wish I could tell you how I feel, Jean," she began, when we reached the water. "Everything seems so strange, almost as if I had been asleep all these sad years, and dreaming a bad dream: and had woke up to a happy new life during this short interval with you. To-morrow the happiness will be over again."

"For a time only, Queen."

Suddenly she raised her head with a quick movement, as if to shake off her gloomy thoughts, and her dark hair fell over her shoulders. She looked like some Indian princess, standing there among those wild rocks, wrapped in her bright scarlet shawl, shadowed by her long hair.

A black, dangerous looking precipice frowned on the other side of the water, and I thought she was looking at that. It had a legend attached to it.

"Clara, they say that long years ago, a young maiden threw herself over this wall of rocks, and was killed, because her lover fell during a hunt, and they never recovered the body."

"Love that will not survive death is not worth much," she answered.

We both looked up at the frowning wall of rock towering there, and both started as the sound of human voices was heard above the roar of the water. Drawing back into the shadow, we listened. By-and-by, struggling together, two men came near enough to be seen; a little later they were standing on the very edge of the precipice, and we could hear what they said. I uttered an exclamation of relief.

"It is Mr. Bond, Clara. Nothing can be very wrong that he has to do with. Are they in sport?"

"Hush, Jean! There is some quarrel. Look."

Mr. Bond was holding the other man at an arm's length from him. Queen had a better place than I; peering through the opening, she uttered an exclamation of horror.

"It is Paul Rayburn!—oh, Jean, look!" she whispered. "He is going to throw Mr. Bond over the cliff!"

"Two can play at that," I said, feeling my face grow white and cold. "Listen, Clara! the man you call Paul Rayburn looks frightened to death. Listen!"

"You won't do it! you won't dare!" came from the lips of the frightened wretch—and the fellow did look a wretch. "You'd be hung for murder."

"I will do it," returned the sternly resolute tones of Mr. Bond. "If you do not in so many words confess your treachery. That you lied when you came here and claimed to be my father's son; that you deliberately broke the peace of a family; turned the rightful owners of the property out of doors, to usurp their place; caused my young sister to work for her living, as one who is born to poverty. Confess, or over you go: and the water tells no tales."

"You lie," cried Paul Rayburn. "You have no proof."

"Proof! why, it is what I have come all the way from Australia to search and get. I have been seeking it out ever since I came. Ask your right-hand man, James Butts, whether I have proof or not. *He* has confessed: and so must you. You scoundrel! you villain! Come closer, Mr. Danvers; he will tell, I think, now."

Mr. Bond shook off the man then—feeling sure, I suppose, that he'd not throw himself into the water. Mr. Danvers came in view, and one or two more:

"Now then, you who have called yourself Paul Rayburn," reiterated Mr. Bond, "speak before you are forced to it, and let the rocks echo with the news of your crime. John Rayburn's friends may be less hard to appease if you do it quietly."

The words came ringing across the stream as the rest had done. Queen was pale as marble.

"Mr. Bond, who are you?" asked my uncle.

"I am John Bond Rayburn; the Jack Rayburn whom you and others thought was dead. I am the true heir to my father's property, Mr. Danvers: this man——"

"Oh, Jack—brother! Oh Jack, I am here! Were my eyes held all this while, I wonder, that I did not know you?"

The interruption came from Queen. She stood there with arms outstretched, as if inviting him to leap the water.

"Why it's Queen! It is Miss Rayburn!" came from some of their lips.

"Wait, Clara," said her brother, in the gentlest voice I'd ever heard.

"I can't come over to you now, my love, but I will meet you at the bridge lower down."

And poor Queen, in her emotion, laughed and cried aloud. Humble Mr. Bond the book-keeper, John Rayburn!

"I have not seen him for years, Jean," she sobbed. "I believed him dead. Oh, Jean! It is like a story out of a romance."

And so it was. We went on to the bridge, and they met us. Mr. Bond—I'm sure I shall not remember his other name—called her his dear little sister, and kissed her many times.

He came up in the evening, this new Mr. Rayburn, and told his tale to us and to my uncle. It's true the vessel was wrecked; but he and some others were saved: picked up by a ship bound to California. From thence, in course of time, he got to Australia, calling himself Bond. There he fell in with a man named Simon Butts, who turned out to be a brother of the foreman, and close friend of the impostor Paul Rayburn. One night, when he had taken too much to drink, this Simon Butts dropped words to John Bond (little thinking it was John Rayburn), that betrayed a great deal. Bond got from him all he could, and then set sail for home to prosecute enquiries, and search out the fraud. Which he at length accomplished, having been working for it all the while in silence.

There's a summary of the case. And if it is not a regular romance, I don't know what is.

And that's the end of my diary, Mary.

The end of the diary; but not quite the end of the case. What with one surprise and another, old Mr. Danvers withdrew his opposition to the marriage, and Earnest wedded Queen.

One surprise and another! Mr. Bond—that is Mr. Rayburn—asked for Jean Clifton. And the years went on.

Mr. Danvers is very gray-haired now; but he is happy as the day is long. Earnest and Queen live with him—he will have it so—and he spoils their eldest little girl, *because she is so like her mother!* Sometimes they all go over to that beautiful place of the Rayburns'; and Mr. Rayburn and his wife Jean welcome them as no other people will ever be welcomed by them in this world. There are children there, too: but Jean boasts that *she* does not spoil them. And at this Mr. Rayburn laughs.

I think, as Jean says, it is a true romance.



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